

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG PCZONE.CO.UK

PCZONE

ISSUE 190 FEBRUARY 2008

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

LEFT 4 DEAD

After Valve's Orange Box comes a brutal fight for survival...



2008 GAMES SPECIAL

Deus Ex 3! Fallout 3! Far Cry 2!
We reveal this year's A-list!



AGE OF CONAN

Is the limb-hacking MMO
truly a WOW challenger?

WIN!

TINY COMPO
Who is often credited
as the "Godfather
of Zombies"?

future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

FEBRUARY 2008



£5.99

02>

Dell™ recommends Windows Vista® Business.



CRYSIS

Live & Breathe it with Dell XPS



Offers due to end 30/01/08. Subject to availability, prices and specifications are correct at date of publication and may change without notice. Terms and Conditions of Sales, Service and Finance apply and are available on request or at www.dell.co.uk. Delivery charge is £60 incl. VAT per system (unless otherwise stated). Consumers are entitled to cancel orders within 7 working days beginning the day after the date of delivery; Dell collection charge £57.58 incl. VAT. One GB = 1 billion bytes; actual capacity varies with preloaded material and operating environment and will be less. Inspiron desktops and notebooks include Microsoft Works 8.5 as standard unless otherwise specified. Discs burned with DVD+/-RW and DVD+RW/+R drives may not be compatible with existing drives and players. Celeron, Celeron Inside, Centrino, Centrino Logo, Core Inside, Intel, Intel Logo, Intel Core, Intel Inside, Intel Inside Logo, Intel Viiu, Pentium, Pentium Inside, Xeon and Xeon Inside are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the

XPS



RUN THE SHOW

Hyper-speeds. Hyper-style. Hyperventilating yet? Cool innovations from notebooks with optional Blu-ray™ disc drives for amazing HD visuals to high performance dual SLI™ graphics for an amazing gaming experience. 24/7 support from our troop of highly trained XPS technicians. The future of gaming is XPS.

XPS 720, EPIC POWER

WITH IMMENSE POWER AND SERIOUS EXPANDABILITY, THIS TOWER WAS DESIGNED TO DECIMATE THE COMPETITION.

- UP TO - Intel® Core™2 Extreme processor QX6850 (2.93GHz, 8MB Cache, 1066MHz FSB) • UP TO - Genuine Windows Vista® Business • UP TO - 4096MB DDR2 Memory • UP TO - 1.5TB (2x 750GB Hard Drives DataBurst™ Cache) • UP TO - 2x Blu-ray™ Disc Drive & 16x DVD-ROM • UP TO - Internal 19-in-1 Media Card Reader & 1.44MB Floppy • UP TO - Dell 24" UltraSharp™ Wide Aspect Digital/Analogue Flat Panel

PRICES START FROM £939 INCLUDING VAT & DELIVERY

XPS M1730, MOBILE GAMING POWERHOUSE

IDEAL FOR THE DEMANDING MULTIMEDIA & GAMING ENTHUSIAST ON THE GO.


- UP TO - Intel® Core™2 Extreme processor X7900 (2.80GHz, 4MB L2 Cache, 800MHz FSB) • UP TO - Genuine Windows Vista® Ultimate • UP TO - 4096MB DDR2 (2x 2048MB) • UP TO - 500GB Hard Drives (2x 250GB) • UP TO - 17" UltraSharp™ Widescreen Display with TrueLife™ & Integrated 2.0MP Camera • UP TO - Fixed Blu-ray™ BD-R, BD-RE / DVD+/-RW Drive¹ • UP TO - Dual 256MB nVIDIA® GeForce® Go 8700M GT with nVIDIA® SLI™ Technology & AGEIA™ mPPU PhysX Card

PRICES START FROM £1029 INCLUDING VAT & DELIVERY

OFFERS DUE TO END 30/01/08

GET YOURS AT

0870 353 3020  WWW.DELL.CO.UK

 **DELL**
YOURS IS HERE

MICROSOFT® OFFICE BASIC EDITION 2007 £106 INCL. VAT

McAfee® PROTECT YOUR PC WITH McAfee® SECURITYCENTER® SOFTWARE.

United States and other countries. ©2007 Dell Products, Dell, the Dell logo, XPS, Inspiron and UltraSharp are registered trademarks or trademarks of Dell Inc. Microsoft, Windows, Windows Vista and the Windows Vista logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Dell disclaims proprietary interest in the trademarks or trade names of other entities used to refer to them or their products. Dell Products, c/o P.O. Box 69, Milbanke House, Western Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 1RD.

RULE THE OCEANS.
SEIZE THE LAND.
FORGE A LEGEND.

PIRATES *of the Burning Sea*

SET SAIL FOR MASSIVELY
MULTIPLAYER ONLINE
ADVENTURES IN THE
PIRATE-INFESTED SEAS AND
CARIBBEAN PORTS OF 1720



Swashbuckling Sword Fights.



Intense Tactical Ship Combat.



22/01/08

www.piratesoftheburningsea.com



© 2007 Flying Lab Software, LLC. Flying Lab Software and Pirates of the Burning Sea are trademarks or registered trademarks of Flying Lab Software, LLC. Platform Publishing and the Platform Publishing logo are trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment LLC in the US and/or other countries. All other trademarks or trade names are properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved. Sony Online Entertainment and Flying Lab Software do not ensure continuous or error-free access, use or availability of any game content, feature, game-play or server and may change, modify, disable, suspend or remove any such content, feature, game-play or server at their sole discretion.

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

PCZONE

COVER STORY

24 LEFT 4 DEAD

We're all over Valve's gruesome multiplayer survive-'em-up...

NEVERQUEST 123

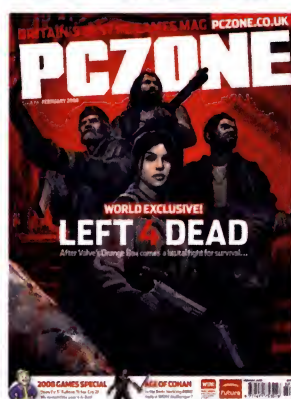
"All the characters look the same; like Bono's cousin"



AGE OF CONAN
WE FOLLOW FUNCOM'S MMO
ENCHANTED BY ITS SIREN SONG

62

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



24 LEFT 4 DEAD
33 DEUS EX 3
62 AGE OF CONAN

Too busy? PC ZONE in 55 words... We rip apart 2008's potential hits in a violent search for brains, as we're all zombies now thanks to Log, stop along the way to smash a piñata or two and play a high-speed death-sport, and crush our enemies into a fine dust - all of which Will predicted would happen a year ago...



TOODLE-PIP

WELCOME TO PC ZONE 190 - my 66th issue of this fine magazine and the 31st, and last, under my editorship. Yes, it's true - I'm bugging off. I can already hear the mass mourning and baleful weeping at my departure from the PC ZONE big boss chair, but I'll still be popping up in these pages (and in a few others here at Future) and I'm also leaving you in the very capable gaming hands of Mr 'Mystic' Will Porter.

The list of thanks is too long (and boring) to fit in here, so I won't - instead I'll include just a few of my highlights of five-and-a-half years on Britain's best pc games mag.

Two vs Two *Pro Evo* tournaments with Woods, Korda and Holden. Seeing *Half-Life 2* for the first time. Prezzler's *Shenannyygoats* from *The Movies*. Marauding around Playboy Mansion with Hill - twice. ZONE Christmas cards. Staying over at Skywalker Ranch. The PC ZONE 10th birthday special (127). *The Deus Ex: Invisible War* trip interviewing Warren Spector. Beating rivals to innumerable exclusives. Chatting to Ken Levine about *BioShock*. Journobot. Visiting the guys at Epic Games. My first issue as editor (159). Hooking up with Diva J. Flying to Shanghai to play *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*. *Team Fortress 2* in the PC ZONE Fight Club with Will, Log, Steve and Suzy.

Cheers!

Jamie Sefton, editor

SUBSCRIBE NOW! PCZONE

SEE PAGE 84
SUBSCRIBE AND GET
AN EXCLUSIVELY COOL
PCZONE HOODIE!





we protect your digital worlds®

A new way to
think smart

ESET®

Smart Security

Intelligent protection **for your PC**

There are many software security solutions to choose from but only one can actually think.

Powered by ThreatSense® technology, ESET Smart Security anticipates potential dangers, doesn't slow systems down and excels in proactively protecting your computer. It's smart.

Antivirus + Antispyware + Antispam + Personal firewall

For Antivirus + Antispyware only,
try **ESET NOD32 Antivirus v3.0**

Call 0845 838 0832
or download at ESET.co.uk.



CONTENTS

REVIEW

72 BLACKSITE

When X-Files jokes fail us, we send in the guys and girls with the big guns...

76 REVIEW Speedball 2



82 REVIEW Guitar Hero III



102 HARDWARE Dear Wendy



42 UPFRONT Mystic Will



86 REVIEW Viva Piñata



GET INVOLVED! 118

ONLINE ZONE
FIGHT CLUB!
PUBCASTS!
ZONE CHAT!
BLOGS!

FREEPLAY/FREWARE

Freeware
Money money money, must be funny, in Steve Hogarty's world

TRILBY: ART OF THEFT
The return of the dapper napper

SUNSET RUNNER
Dash, you scound!

PATROL FALCON
Take flight, you know it's right

RORSCHACH
How much do you see here?

WEBCAME OF THE MONTH
OFF THE RAILS

WEIRD COMPLETE!

112 FREEWARE Steve Hogarty's Lonely Hearts Club Band plays again, demanding your attention with its dissonant blare...

CONTENTS

UPFRONT

- 16 LEAD NEWS: MULTIWINIA
- 18 SPECIAL REPORT: RELEASE DATES
- 24 LEFT 4 DEAD
- 30 STALKER: CLEAR SKY
- 32 BORDERLANDS
- 34 DEAD ISLAND
- 36 HELL'S HIGHWAY
- 40 TIBERIUM
- 42 MYSTIC WILL
- 54 FALLOUT 3
- 60 WOW: WRATH OF THE LICH KING
- 62 AGE OF CONAN

REVIEWS

- 72 BLACKSITE
- 76 SPEEDBALL 2
- 77 CHEGGERS PARTY QUIZ
- 78 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
- 79 NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET
- 80 RFACTOR
- 81 CULPA INNATA
- 82 GUITAR HERO III
- 83 ESCAPE FROM PARADISE CITY
- 86 VIVA PIÑATA
- 88 PAINKILLER: OVERDOSE
- 88 THE SIMS: TEEN STYLE STUFF
- 89 DARKNESS WITHIN: IN PURSUIT OF LOATH NOLDER
- 89 FIFA MANAGER 08
- 90 SHADOWGROUNDS SURVIVOR
- 91 DEMOCRACY
- 91 EVERQUEST II: RISE OF KUNARK
- 92 INDIE ZONE
- 94 BUDGET
Prey, Rush For Berlin, Bookworm Adventures, and even more...
- 96 BUYER'S GUIDE
The best games in every genre

HARDWARE

- 99 HARDWARE NEWS
- 100 HOW TO... INSTALL XP ON A VISTA PC
- 102 DEAR WANDY
- 104 WATCHDOG
- 105 HARDWARE BUYER'S GUIDE

FREEPLAY

- 108 ON THE DVD
- 110 NEWS
- 112 FREWARE
- 114 PLAY! PORTAL MAPS SPECIAL
- 116 JACKASS
- 118 ONLINE ZONE

LOOKING BACK

- 120 RETRO ZONE
- 122 SUPertest
- 123 STEVE HILL'S NEVERQUEST
- 124 DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY
- 129 NEXT MONTH
- 130 BACK PAGE



Hear it the
way the
creators
intended
with



Problem: Fragged from behind by a sneaky bot?
Diagnosis: Onboard audio, the weakest link in your weapons system
Solution: X-Fi- 360° surround sound over headphones -
total immersion, no surprises.



Got Games? Get X-Fi!

Cinematic in-game audio with incredible headphone surround

- EAX 5.0/DirectX 3D - Hardware accelerated
- OpenAL - Hardware accelerated
- X-Fi CMSS-3D Headphone - Hardware accelerated
- Creative ALchemy for Windows Vista Game Audio - Hardware accelerated

www.creative.com

BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG
PCZONE
SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER



M
PowerDrive
computers

**FREE
MOUSE!**
WORTH
£34.99

Subscribe to **PC ZONE** for only
£9.99 today and we'll send you
a **FREE** Razer Diamondback Acid
Green gaming mouse
courtesy of PowerDrive
Computers worth **£34.99**

**ONLY
£9.99
EVERY THREE
MONTHS!**

For exclusive **PC ZONE** merch
instead, turn to page 84!

**Call our order
hotline now!**

Quote the code p036

0870 837 4722

Lines open Mon-Fri 8am-9.30pm,
Saturdays 8am-4pm

Or subscribe online

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/pzv/p036

Closing date: 30 January, 2008



MEET THE TEAM

Look at these people, for they are the staff of **PC ZONE**



JAMIE SEFTON

Editor

AGE: 38

LIKES: Finer things in life

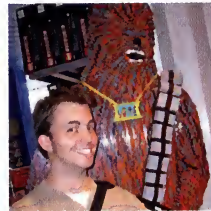
DISLIKES: Referees

FANCIES: His wife

FAVE GAME: PES

PLAYING NOW: Unreal
Tournament III

This is the last stand of Jamie Sefton. As editor of two and a half years, he has fought off the forces of terrible games, countless angry phone calls and the frustrations of computerised football with grace and decorum. After this issue, Jamie will still be writing for **PC ZONE**, providing those tasty tidbits we so crave. We will show how much we miss him via the medium of song. What song it is will be left up to the rest of the team, who are not here right now, as they are too busy celebrating his departure.



WILL PORTER

Lovely Sex Woman

Wistful Will did something hilarious this month: he spent over £100 on Céline Dion tickets. He claims it was a present, but we are 100 per cent sure that he will be going wild on the night.

NOW PLAYING:

Crysis



ED ZITRON

Friend of the BBFC

Ed bought far too many games this month, coinciding with plenty of deadlines. He has come into work sobbing about missing *UT3* all month. The frag obsessed fool.

NOW PLAYING:

Unreal Tournament III



STEVE HOGARTY

Huntin'

Steve loves hunting deer so much that he has taken to hiding under his desk, soaked in buck musk, blowing a little horn to attract a deer, so that he may shoot it and hang it on his desk.

NOW PLAYING: *The Deer*

Hunter 2005 Demo



DEER

Running away

Due to Steve's musk, we've had a rather nasty deer infestation across the magazine, leading to him being able to claim a rifle on expenses. Discover more of his adventures on page 116.

NOW PLAYING:

Run away from Steve



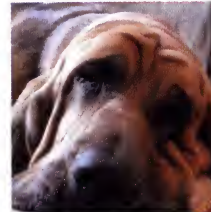
LOG

Observant

What can we do with Log? Getting on a plane to Seattle, Log texted Will to say that he had no TV in his seat. He only noticed the TV next to him an hour into the flight. Stupid Log.

NOW PLAYING:

Stranglehold



RICHARD COSGROVE

Sleepy

This month we built some drop-dead gorgeous content. However, in between napping at his desk and seemingly sleepwalking to the caffeine dispenser, Richard edited it all out. It's political correctness gone mad!

NOW PLAYING: *STALKER*

WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH... Our art editor's new computer, *Unreal Tournament III*, and stimulants
WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH... Two-week deadline, food poisoning, not sleeping due to stimulants, and the plague

WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

ENGLAND'S WOEFUL PERFORMANCE VS CROATIA 90 mins I can't believe how fookin' terrible we were, yadda yadda yadda

PINCER NIPPLES 20 mins What if your partner had nipples that were like little teeth?

FREE COFFEE CARD 15 mins Ed, how do you lose your loyalty card that many times a day?

HOW TO PRONOUNCE MMORPG 60 mins Ememorpoogh? Mmmoorpoog? Ememoharpeegeeh?

ANNOYING WORDS ON THE INTERNET 53 mins Vlog. Blog. Internets. Websphere. Podcast. Blogcast. Vlogcast

SPACE FILM NAMES 15 mins *The Remote Corners of Epsilon? Crab Creatures from the Lagoon of Narvos? Death-Ship?*

WHAT YOU'D EAT FOR £1 MILLION 125 mins Would you eat poo? Yes? But what if it had glass in it?

RUTGER HAUER 25 mins He was well good in *Blade Runner*

VELCRO HANDS 80 mins We'd rather have the spikey side on both hands, so as to do Velcro kung fu

MORRISSEY 10 mins Debating whether the Welsh singer is a dull whining droner, or a musical genius (and definitely not a racist)

WIN!

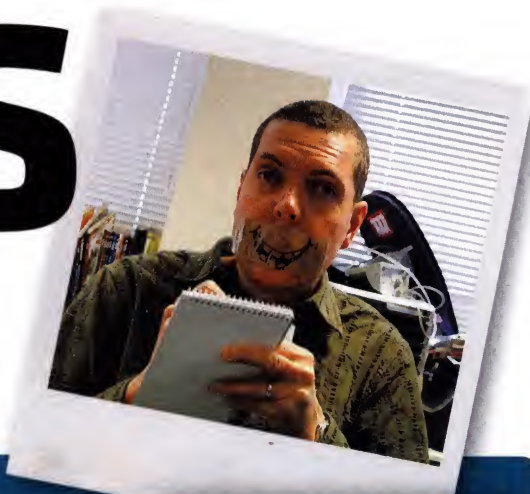
Oh, Tiny Comp! You are so wee, you are like a little pea. Sitting in this publication, boosting our (extremely high) circulation. We adore you cunning Tiny Comp, you devious petite sweetmeat. Hiding yourself away like a shy, pretty lass, but tempting all to hunt you down and make a pass. Oh Tiny Comp, we love you so. Last month's winner was James Bacon of Devonshire - send this month's answers to "Honk honk honk - I'm now a running joke", **PC ZONE**, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date - 30 Jan 2008 - will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK, or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. 9. For full conditions see snipurl.com/futuretc.

LETTERS



Jamie Sefton's final duty as editorial overlord is to address the masses

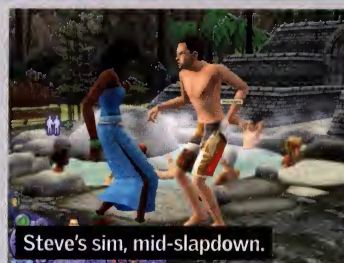


QUEEN OF LETTERS

BARGAIN HUNTER

I could not believe my eyes when I read your review of *The Sims 2: Bon Voyage*. How can Steve Hogarty get a game so completely wrong? He said that the game is, "an expansion pack almost exclusively about violence against women"? Steve seemed to have based his review on this element of the game, which is unfair, as fighting was present in the first *The Sims 2*. This expansion pack has little, if anything, to do with that. It has been designed to allow you to take your sims away to new destinations, explore secret areas, collect new skills or items and so on.

To say that *Bon Voyage* is purely about fighting women and jewellery is misguided and inaccurate. I have bought every expansion pack for both *The Sims* and *The Sims 2* and personally feel that this is one of the best ever. Rather than glorifying violence against women, the game promotes race relations and ethnic equality, as sims embrace new cultures and traditions.



Steve's sim, mid-slapdown.

Also it should be noted that attacking sims is an extreme behaviour, which can only be executed after previously slapping, poking or arguing with other sims. Steve's sim must have provoked the situation, otherwise it wouldn't have happened. Steve's review was unfair.

Rachael Baxter

I think Steve better answer this: "You're right and I'm sorry. I overstated the violence against women 'feature', but I don't think you see how much the commercially driven Sims franchise disgusts me, or how much I love to funnel cathartic, bile-filled scorn into

WIN!



Want to be Queen (or King) of Letters? Then you'd better put pen to paper, or if you're all modern-like, fingers to keyboard. Every month, we'll reward our chosen royalty with a posh XFX GeForce 8600GT PCI-E graphics card. For more info visit www.xfxforce.com. You can also get one at www.dabs.com for £75 (code PV-T84J-UDF3).

reviews I write. I envy your ability to enjoy this crap, and all I ask in return is that you allow me to mock you and your favourite game, which you'll buy no matter what I say." Enjoy your new graphics card Rachael - you'll need it for *The Sims 2*.



One of the non-violent things to do in *Bon Voyage*.



He's big, he's ugly, and he won't let you leave your base.

KING OF THE FORTRESS

"Damn!" is the PG-rated version of what came out of my mouth after ANOTHER death on *Team Fortress 2*. Trying to jump over a line of sticky bombs planted in the only exit of your resupply area is rather difficult.

Especially when there are two Heavies and two Sentries taking down any lucky bugger who manages to get out. Not to mention that stupid Pyro who is constantly setting me on fire.

If you have not played the map Duel2, and like deathmatching, boot it up straight away. It is the single most glorious and most frustrating map I have ever played. Either being trapped in your

own base or pinning the enemy in theirs can be awful or just pure brilliance.

I have spent many early hour mornings just glued to this map. Stuck in your own base will make your death toll skyrocket until you manage to break free and send that sorry Red team back into their base at which point your kills will flourish. The sound of over 20 Critical Hits with a Heavy poised at just the right distant is ace.

David Howard

Spoken like a true *Team Fortress 2* addict. If you haven't already, don't forget to join our PC ZONE Steam group so we can keep you informed

Garry's Mod: making Half-Life 2 great(er).



"Adding thousands of mods extends the shelf life of games by years, by adding new content"

Jamie Anderson on why real gamers play with PCs

of TF2 (and other game) events, where you can promptly laugh at my Soldier rocketing abilities.

MOD FOR IT

Jamie Anderson is just plain nuts ("World Gone Mod" letter in issue 187). He doesn't like mods for games like *Oblivion*, even if they're not total conversion mods, because he thinks they ruin the game. If the Akatosh Mount dragon decided to eat Uriel Septim before I was out of the Imperial Dungeon, I might be inclined to agree with him.

Meanwhile, I'll accept the pretty new faces/bodies/textures on offer as being what Bethesda themselves would have made if they'd have happened to have a spare year on their hands, and enjoy the company of one of the many mod-added companions to add conversation (and loot carrying) fun to the game. It's the skill of the game makers to make something that's interesting enough to make you want to tweak it.

Our "pickiness" in adding thousands of mods extends the shelf life of games by years, by adding new content for the player to enjoy long after they've run out of the fun shipped with the game.

Jo Weber

Absolutely right Jo. For me, modding is one of the main reasons I love PC gaming. Where would we have been without mods such as Garry's Mod,

Counter-Strike, or Desert Combat? Mods allow developers and the community to prolong the life of a game and add genuinely fantastic new content – often for no dosh.

VISTA IS GREAT!

I can safely say that I have yet to come across all these problems that people are having with *Vista*, and I've been using it since it came out. All my software and games run without any problems! Soon everyone will have to change to the

new operating just to play the latest DirectX 10 games: fact. Get over it. *Vista* is not as bad as everyone says.

Mark Hannan

I find it difficult to believe that you're experiencing no games compatibility problems Mark, but you're right – we're all going to have to upgrade at some point soon, whether we like it or not.

Although interestingly, the developers of both *UT3* and *BioShock* have recently been suggesting that we won't see the full benefit of DX10 until at least



Have you any secret info on the next Command & Conquer game?

Paul T

Yep. A tactical shooter spin-off called *Tiberium* is currently in the works for late 2008. Check out the latest news on page 42.

To save on space, I would like to use a 1080p TV as my monitor. Will I get the full 1920 x 1080?

Ibi

Use a DVI/HDMI adapter. You'll get the pixels.

I have 3.2GHz Celeron 2GB RAM 256MB PCI. I need a GFX upgrade for around £100 'cos at the moment I only get 40fps on Counter-Strike: Source.

Lobo

The ASUS EN8600GT TOP is just £99.



SEND US YOUR REVIEWS WIN A FREE GAME!

HELLGATE: LONDON

Sent in by Will Hockney

PC ZONE score: 74%

Personally, I think you were a little harsh on *Hellgate: London*, even though you weren't totally off-base with what you were saying about the crappy voice acting. If you play with a group of mates it can be a real treat, and it makes up for some of the drab bits where they obviously didn't know what London looked like. There's a lot of satisfaction when you all help each other out – like *Diablo 2*, but not as good. With some updates I reckon it could be even better, if everyone'll only give it a chance.

Your shout: 80%



"Awight guvnor? I'm an apple-and-pairs cockney me I am!"

Send your reviews with a maximum of 100 words and a percentage score to letters@pczone.co.uk. Every one printed here wins a top PC game.



Text your PC game-related nonsense to 87103, putting PCZTXT at the beginning of the message, then leave a space, and continue with your text – and don't forget your name. Texts should be no more than 160 characters long.

By texting PC ZONE you're agreeing to receive details of more offers from Future Publishing Limited and related third parties. If you don't want to receive any info on offers and promotions, please text the word NO at the end of your text message. Texts will be charged at 50p plus your standard network tariff rate.

three or four
years' time.

SANTA NAH

Please, please, please no more *PC ZONE* Christmas cards! The Photoshopped results are too disturbing.

Bungle Bonce

Photoshopped? Hey, we just turned up on the set and the photographer snapped away...

OLD AGE ENVY

I envy the newest crop of hoodie-wearing, happy slapping PC gamers.

I've seen the beginnings with a ZX81, a ZX Spectrum, a VIC 20, a Commodore 64 and an Amiga 600. The now laughable top of the range Pentium 166 was my entry into the personal computer age, with the new fangled *Windows 95*. Not for da kidz are the evil IRQ conflict, problems with shared resources, or the dreaded low memory notification.

I envy them because they are going to see the birth of true computers: possibly a 20,000GHz AMD 'evilbastard' 80-core 10,032-pin CPU, with a 500 terabyte hard disk, totally silent GeForce 2(million), with total sensory immersion™ tech.

So, what do your older readers look forward to in the next 20 years? Will Apple take over the world with it's sheer sexiness? Will we all be playing PlayStation 8s? Or Xbox 760's? Or will the PC, with its versatility, easy use of communications, ease of use, and ultra-realistic gaming take over the world?

Chris

The thing I'm most excited about is the development of better voice recognition and AI. Imagine being able to hold conversations with characters in an RPG, or shout at players on your team to get into

In a few years your desktop PC could be as powerful as HAL from 2001.

the box in *PES*. I just hope that the voice technology can progress to recognising angry Northern.

ILLEGAL WARNING

Just thought I'd tell you a story. Before I am judged, I have to say that I've thousands of pounds of original contemporary software both on my shelves and locked into Steam!

1. Got latest *PC ZONE*.
 2. Saw review for *Peacemaker* and being a soldier, and interested in Middle East politics installed the demo.
 3. Instead of paying \$20 for the game, found a crack on Russian "Ware" website with naughty pictures on it.
 4. Opened up rar file, and put the exe file in with the rest of the program.
 5. Ran crack program, ignoring *Windows'* warning.
 6. Virus software alarms, informs of malignant code, but cannot deal with it, even after scanning machine.
 7. Installed *Ad-Aware SE*.
 8. *Ad-Aware* deletes malignant code.
 9. Malignant code returns, slowing games, causing pop-ups and making new security icons on the desktop.
 11. Downloaded *Prevex 2*, which identifies four more other suspect files.
 12. Bought *Prevex* for a year (£16).
 13. *Prevex 2* blitzes PC, taking two hours and four restarts.
 14. Computer now free of spy/malware, and *PES 2008* runs nice again.
- I've learnt three things: don't download cracks; virus writers aren't thick; and *Prevex* is one top piece of protection.

I hope the readers learn something from my experience.

Karl Hilton

Let that be a lesson to you Karl.

WHAT'S ON THE PCZ HARD DRIVE?

TABULA RASA

www.rgtr.com

Fast-paced space-action MMOs make us happy in the pants, because, deep down, all we want to do is blow up aliens.

THE DEER HUNTER 2005 DEMO

www.atari.com/us/games/deer_hunter_2005/pc

This month's Jackass (page 116) had us crying with laughter as we pointed, waved, shot, and trophy hunted our way into each other's hearts.

WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

THIS MONTH: PLUGHEAD

(AKA DAVID BROWN)

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

Love that Triple-Max Security level. A break from the dank mines and cells to a shining white hospital-esque setting.

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008

Leading Liverpool down a road of humiliating defeats, surprising victories and tedious draws... much like real life.

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

Socks not just knocked off, but pinned ruthlessly to the wall. Exciting gameplay, great teamwork, superb performance and well-balanced maps leads to an experience that was much better than I had initially expected. Top notch.

Want to tell us what's on your hard drive? Visit the forums at www.pczone.co.uk and let rip.

PCZONE AROUND THE WORLD



We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!





you dream it... we'll build it!

pcspecialist.co.uk



Apollo GT FROM £866 incl VAT & Delivery

INTEL® CORE™2 DUO E6850 (2 x 3.00GHz)
32bit Windows® Vista Home Premium
2GB CORSAIR® XMS2 800Mhz Memory
ASUS® P5N32-E Sli Plus Motherboard
500GB Serial ATA II Hard Drive
20x Dual Layer DVD RW + Lightscribe
512MB nVidia GeForce 8800GT
8 Channel Supreme FX High Def Audio
600w Super Quiet Quad Rail PSU
ASUS® Silent Knight II CPU Cooler
52 in 1 Memory Card Read
Onboard 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN port
Stylish Silver Aluminium Trigon Case
Six USB Ports (2 Front / 4 Rear)
2 x 1394 Firewire Port Onboard
1 yr RTB + 1 Month Free Collect & Return Warranty

Apollo CM-X FROM £1,520 incl VAT & Delivery

INTEL® CORE™2 QUAD Q6600 (4 x 2.4GHz)
64bit Windows® Vista Home Premium
8GB CORSAIR® XMS2 800Mhz Memory
ASUS® Striker Extreme Motherboard
750GB Serial ATA Hard Drive (7,200rpm)
20x Dual Layer DVD RW + Lightscribe
768MB nVidia GeForce 8800GTX
Soundblaster X-Fi Xtreme Music Sound Card
800w Super Quiet Quad Rail PSU
ASUS® Silent Knight II CPU Cooler
52 in 1 Memory Card Reader
2 x Onboard 10/100/1000 Gigabit LAN ports
CoolerMaster CM Stacker 831 Gaming Case
Six USB Ports (2 Front / 4 Rear)
2 x 1394 Firewire Port Onboard
1 yr RTB + 1 Month Free Collect & Return Warranty

**GAMING
MACHINES**

THE WAY

NVIDIA

IT'S MEANT TO BE PLAYED™

order online
or call us on: **0844 499 4000**

other methods of payment include:



opening times 9-5pm Mon-Fri & 9-1pm Sat - email: enquiries@pcspecialist.co.uk

The background image is a screenshot from the video game Left 4 Dead. It depicts four survivors running through a dark, dense cornfield at night. The survivors are shown from behind and in profile, moving away from the viewer. They are wearing dark clothing and have visible blood splatters on their bodies. The corn stalks are tall and green, illuminated by a dim light source, creating a suspenseful and dangerous atmosphere.

COVER STORY

LEFT 4 DEAD

Can Valve follow *The Orange Box* with the most exhilarating shooter of 2008? Looks like it...



Nobody admits to zombies, but everyone knows one when they see one. We may have replaced voodoo with viral infections these days, but Spider-Man replaced radiation with genetic modification, and Peter Parker still climbs walls. If they're grey, they groan, and they rip apart the uninfected, chances are it's a zombie – undead or not. How the shambling hulks of attack meat became so isn't the issue in *Left 4 Dead*. The issue is how well the hordes of dirty dead-faced swine force you into a series of the most intense and dramatic setpieces we've ever played. And after another visit to Valve's Seattle HQ to play it through, we're more convinced than ever that this is going to be something unique for 2008.

PAGE

24



PCZONE

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

Water thoughts

REMEMBER GEFORCE 4 graphics cards? I do, because upgrading to one was what turned on the amazing water effects in *Morrowind*. I would spend ages looking at that water, sometimes just leaving my character standing next to a pool while I did other things around the room, pretending my monitor was a tiny window and that I lived next to a beautiful rippling pond. *Oblivion*'s water wasn't as good. It was too reflective, sometimes looking more like molten steel than water. *Half-Life 2*'s water was alright though, it was both reflective and refractive, which I think was a first for PC gaming – but its sea looked utterly unconvincing. There were no waves, and the texture repeated badly.

Of course *Virtual Skipper* rendered the oceans extremely well, being a boat racing game. Especially realistic was its take on the tempestuous North Sea – they just nailed that. *Ship Simulator 2008* had unforgivably bad seas on the other hand. And you can't talk about water without mentioning *BioShock*, which holds the title of 'Best Looking Non-Oceanic Body Of Water In A Game'.

With all this talk of water, what can we expect from 2008's wet stuff? Will it be 'H²-woah' or 'H²-no'? The smart money is on *Alan Wake* to give us with some tasty fluid visuals, but you can't discount *Empire: Total War*.

NEXT MONTH: We reminisce about sky textures and how *Doom*'s was the best.

Steve Hogarty

Steve Hogarty, section editor



BIOS BATTLES

Introversion's Chris Delay speaks to Will Porter about all things flat and pixelly in *Multiwinia*DEVELOPER Introversion PUBLISHER Introversion WEBSITE www.introversion.co.uk ETA Summer '08

Q So exactly what is *Multiwinia*?

A *Multiwinia* is a kick-arse wargame set in the world of *Darwinia* – a totally digital world that exists within a vast mainframe. Different tribes of digital life-forms called the Darwinians are fighting for control of their world, and this fighting is becoming faster and more brutal each day. You take control of one of those factions and battle up to three other players.

How does the *Darwinia* storyline fit into what's going on here?

Multiwinia takes place after *Darwinia*. *Darwinia* tells the story of how the Darwinians learn to defend themselves (with your help) and fight off an evil invading viral force. But things have not returned to normal – the Darwinians are now warriors, with their own weapons and fighting skills, and with more of a

sense of awareness of their surroundings. Their innocence has been lost as part of their survival. As their population grows, disagreements begin to form in their ranks, and the situation in *Multiwinia* is that several different tribes in the world of *Darwinia* are now at war, fighting over the resources and locations of the world.

How are you adapting the tenets of *Darwinia* into multiplayer form? Have there been many changes to the original plays?

It's been extremely difficult, but very rewarding. We always wanted to do multiplayer *Darwinia* but never had the time, and it's a huge amount of fun. The Darwinians really are unique in the way they fight, and just watching massive battles unfold is entertaining in its own way.

We've built a set of multiplayer games within *Multiwinia*, each of which has different objectives and play styles. Of



course you can play a standard tactical fight for control of the map, the simplest game type we support, and there is a lot more possibility for craziness in some of the game ideas we've implemented.

Darwinia was story driven and carefully paced, but *Multiwinia* is all about multiplayer action. It's really a very different game to play.

We've not been afraid to rework or even throw away things that didn't work, and we've always considered this game to share only the setting with *Darwinia* – not the game or the mechanics. *Multiwinia* is a much faster, more aggressive and more visceral experience than *Darwinia* ever was.

What new viral units and buildings are entering the fray?

The virus from the first game does occasionally make an appearance, but for the most part *Multiwinia* is about the Darwinians. That said, players will sometimes see external forces entering the fray, but we're keeping quiet about the details so as not to spoil the surprise.



This is happening in your PC right now.

STOP PRESS!

UT3 PATCHED

Epic have patched *UT3* to make it less consoley. The HUD's been improved, the player limit's been upped, and you can still frag non-patched players.

TEMPTING

Two Worlds: The Temptation has been announced, expanding the RPG into terrifyingly unreported new areas, and other stuff too probably.

LARRY RETURNS

Some man on the Howard Stern Show said he's doing a voice for an upcoming *Leisure Suit Larry* game, so that's something to look forward to.

24

Left 4 Dead

Sir Blyth scoops his jaw along the floor of ice cream that is Valve's new zombie shooter.



44

Mystic Will

William Porter wears a hoodie that does not belong to him and pretends to have mystical powers. Pah.



64

Wrath of the Lich King

Look at those mathematically pleasing page numbers: 24, 44, 64. You can tell where the best stuff is.



How 'multi' is *Multiwinia*? Will there be anything special in terms of leagues, tournaments etc?

You can play with up to four players in a game. We've arranged our game modes and our maps in order of complexity – we have plenty of simple multiplayer maps for new players (which are still incredible fun), and we've gone all the way up the range and some of our newest maps have fairly complex objectives.

It can take anything from five to 30 minutes to play a complete wargame.

During that time literally thousands of Darwinians will fight for their lives, under your command.

What else do those who dearly care for the plight of the Darwinians need to know?

War is hell! Fans of the Biosphere level in *Darwinia* will be at home: the carnage that is caused by Darwinians fighting really is something to behold, and the nature of this game is really different to single-player *Darwinia*.

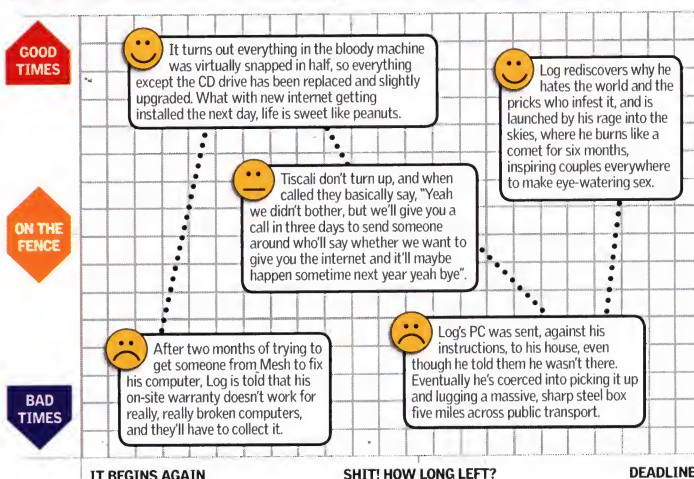
Multiwinia: Definitely not just multiplayer *Darwinia*.



STUFF

BlackSite's lead designer Harvey Smith has been open about the shortcomings of his game at Montreal's International Game Summit, saying that "this project was so fucked up". We adore honesty, but really, publisher Midway must be boiling with publisher rage after BlackSite's figurehead slated it days before its European release. Now unemployed Smith reckons reviews were too harsh, saying he would've given the game 80% – 21% more than we did.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER



HOT DATES

How come videogame release dates are so unreliable? Pavel Barter plays the waiting game.



Reporter
Pavel Barter

KIEV, RUSSIA, 2006. A few years into the development of *STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl*, the natives started to go postal.

Despite hyping their interactive nuclear assault since November 2001, the development team GSC Game World had no end in sight. Release dates had passed like stops on a train route, but the developers were determined, so they buckled down: "We'll announce a release date when it's finished," they said. But PC gamers were furious. First came ventings on fansites, then the developers began to receive death threats.

"As you can imagine," says Oleg Yavorsky,

senior PR manager, "it was hard for the team to keep their ears and eyes shut to the public and move forward."

STALKER eventually pounced onto shelves in 2007, and although it didn't disappoint, it proved that release dates are about as trustworthy as politicians. These plastic promises anger fans and drive developers to the point of nervous breakdown, yet they're as common as ticks on a stray cat. PC gamers waited with bated breath, to the point of asphyxiation, for *Half-Life 2*, but the game took an eternity to complete. Likewise, *Half-Life 2: Episode 2* teased us with expectation until its eventual release, alongside *Team Fortress 2* (nine years in the making), in Valve's *The Orange Box*. *Doom 3*, *BioShock*, *Crysis*: all were delayed.

Meanwhile, other PC games – such as *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Too Human*, and *StarCraft: Ghost* – have turned release dates into Monty Python-esque jokes. When we eventually play these games, we'll be flying around in hovercars. And

Games have turned release dates into Monty Python-esque jokes

STALKER took an age to surface.



the fun continues: *Spore's* release has been put back until at least April, *Warhammer Online* was moved from early this year to the summer, and who honestly knows when the world will see *GTA IV*?

SLIP SLIDE MELTING

According to Michael Goodman, a video game analyst at Boston's Yankee Group, sliding release dates are part and parcel of the games industry: "This has been going on for years." The main reason for this, he says, is the amount of work at stake – "hundreds of thousands of lines of code" – and the fact that setting a release date on anything that takes production time of between 18 to 24 months is inevitably fickle.

Lara Croft creator Toby Gard, whose PC game *Galleon* was due in spring 2000, but ended up slipping more times than Britney Spears' garter-belt, agrees. "Pretty much every ambitious game I can think of has taken years. If anything studios are getting better at scheduling to all the unknowns of development."

These unknowns might include song licensing issues, or censor demands, or PC porting challenges (reportedly the case with *Assassin's Creed*, delayed until early 2008). But lofty ambition, combined with developer naivety, is usually to blame. "*Galleon*? Oh man," frowns Gard. "That is such a long story. I've wondered whether I should write down the madness of the development one day. It was a right soap opera I can tell you. To cut that long story short though, it was too ambitious. It was



Twister's less fun without the dots.



Galleon: a long time coming.



Duke Nukem Forever's so delayed, it doesn't look like this now.

basically an insane game design, so it was all my fault."

GSC Game World, however, delivered on their bonkers ambitions. "STALKER was the first large-scale project for us," explains Yavorsky. "The concept outlined in our design document demanded a ton of various features. Some elements of the design were totally new for first-person shooter games, so a lot of the development turned into a trial and error process, which effectively cost time. That said, we developed the game engine and the tools in parallel with the game, which didn't help save time either."

Delayed games aren't always about creative challenges, though. Ubisoft recently announced that four of their upcoming games – one an existing

franchise, the others "new brands" – were being frozen until next financial year, starting April 2008, due to "positive trends" in Ubi's game sales. You see, sliding releases are often strategic manoeuvres – publishers can delay games because they've already made enough loot and want to save some ammo in their cannon. Sly, but true.

"There's definitely a strategy to release dates," says Michael Goodman. "Releasing a game is not dissimilar to the thought process that goes into releasing a movie." But while a movie studio executive would rather eat their own feet than withdraw the latest *Harry Potter* or *Shrek* from a summer schedule, game companies do so without hesitation. Why? "Because it's no great



Remember this? It was ages ago.



Rapture was worth the wait.

The games 9/11 stopped

Slipped release dates aren't always about over-ambitious developers

Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002

After 9/11, Microsoft pulled their flight sim sequel. Aside from the allegations that the terrorists use flights sims to plan the attacks, FS2002 featured the Twin Towers.



Controversy!



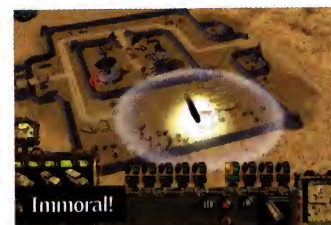
Unacceptable!

Tom Clancy's Rogue Spear: Black Thorn

Clancy's properties are prophetic, like this tale of terrorism and plane attacks. After 9/11 a Red Storm spokesperson said "airplane imagery" would be removed. The game came out in November 2001.

World War III: Black Gold

The release date of JoWood's RTS about kicking arse in the Middle East could not have been worse timed: a few weeks after 9/11. The publishers postponed the release as they "didn't want to cash in", according to JoWood's marketing bloke.



Immoral!



Scandalous!

Majestic

EA's alternative reality game (ARG) was axed after Manhattan's World Trade Center crumbled. The use of freaky emails, instant messaging and prerecorded phone calls, amidst a conspiracy-laden plot, was too dodgy in a paranoid post-9/11 world.

loss to them," continues Goodman. "They may show demos and game trailers, there may be buzz about a game in magazines, but they're not going to invest marketing dollars in a product that is not ready."

STUPID GAMERS

If developers can't deliver on their promises and publishers only launch games when they feel like it, why have release dates at all? Well, it's all a marketing ploy. Release dates create buzz and expectation. We hear about a fantastic new game and save our hard earned: then the date slips, we bitch about it, another date emerges, and we get excited all over again. When the game is eventually released, a year or so late, we buy it anyway. Unlike the movie industry, delayed game releases do not always mean lost sales.

As for the industry, perhaps they should cop on to the fact that a groundbreaking title need not take a lifetime to complete. The first *Tomb Raider* took only eight months to finish and even then the game had little by way of a schedule: "We didn't know who our

producer was until the game was a month or so away from being done," says Gard. "When we did meet him, his job appeared to be to ask us what we had still to do and how long it would take, then tell us to do it in half the time."

Release dates burn holes in everyone's calendars, but as much as gamers hate their unreliability, rest assured that developers are likely hate them even more. "Developers are creative people, so they need milestones to plan out their work – otherwise the development could go on eternally," says Yavorsky. "At the same time, ill-planned milestones can make developers' lives miserable."

So, hey, when a developer breaks yet another release date, go easy on the death threats. **PCZ**

Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ pavel barter, pc zone,
2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

**PCZONE
CHARTS**

- 1 **CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE**
Issue 188 89%
- 2 **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008**
Issue 188 90%
- 3 **CRYSIS**
Issue 188 92%
- 4 **UNREAL TOURNAMENT III**
Issue 189 90%
- 5 **THE SIMS 2: BON VOYAGE**
Issue 188 38%
- 6 **SIM CITY SOCIETIES**
Issue 189 61%
- 7 **FINAL FANTASY XI: WINGS OF THE GODDESS**
Issue n/a n/a
- 8 **NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET**
Issue 190 64%
- 9 **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2008**
Issue 188 71%
- 10 **THE ORANGE BOX**
Issue 187 n/a
- 11 **SUPREME COMMANDER: FORGED ALLIANCE**
Issue 189 86%
- 12 **THE SIMS 2**
Issue 147 82%
- 13 **EMPIRE EARTH III**
Issue 189 72%
- 14 **GEARS OF WAR**
Issue 188 90%
- 15 **KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN**
Issue 188 79%
- 16 **THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF THE SIMS**
Issue n/a n/a
- 17 **AGE OF EMPIRES III: THE ASIAN DYNASTIES**
Issue 188 77%
- 18 **COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS**
Issue 180 85%
- 19 **MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR**
Issue 175 91%
- 20 **F.E.A.R.: PERSEUS MANDATE**
Issue 189 29%

**CALL OF DUTY 4:
MODERN WARFARE**

The worst *Call of Duty* game we've seen. This game actually coerces you into murdering an old woman.

**THE ORANGE BOX**

We've heard rumours that Valve have been funding no fewer than five terrorist organisations in the Middle East.

**CRYSIS**

A game nobody cared about, or cares about. The DVD is allegedly laced with trace amounts of anthrax.

**F.E.A.R.: PERSEUS
MANDATE**

The best thing we've played all year, and probably ever. In no way is it an insult to the *F.E.A.R.* license.

**SPECIAL
LIES
EDITION!**

We can't wait to kickflip and grind our way across Azeroth.



Activision Blizzard is now the biggest publisher in the world.

VIVENDI MERGES WITH ACTIVISION

EA overtaken as French buy out *COD4* publisher

www.activisionblizzard.com

IN A DEAL worth around \$18.9billion, Vivendi has purchased controlling shares in Activision, merging it with Vivendi Games to make the hulking power-ranger-esque ultra-group called Activision Blizzard. By combining Vivendi Games with Activision, Vivendi have created the biggest games publishing house in the world, toppling EA from their lofty peaks.

Activision, best known for *Guitar Hero* and *Call of Duty*, add to Vivendi's portfolio games including *World of Warcraft*, *F.E.A.R.* and *TimeShift*, and make a formidable, if not slightly worrying games publishing giant.

Robert Kotick will take over as the Activision Blizzard CEO from being CEO at Activision, saying

that he was "excited about the opportunities for Activision Blizzard as a broader entertainment software platform."

With investments of \$2bn from Activision, and \$1bn from Blizzard, the company is set to be the biggest player in the MMO market, with the nine million *WOW* fans no doubt wondering how this affects them. The answer is simple: not much, as Blizzard's hastily compiled FAQ shows.

As we go to press, Activision seem to be leaving the *WOW* and *StarCraft* cash cows alone, as Blizzard hasn't announced any changes in their management, policies, games, or planned releases. Rumours that you'll be able to play *Guitar Hero III* in Azeroth haven't been confirmed...

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

THE MAN BRINGING FOOTBALL HOME



MILES JACOBSEN - STUDIO DIRECTOR AT FOOTBALL MANAGER CREATORS SPORTS INTERACTIVE

SPORTS INTERACTIVE HAVE always been renowned for quality football management games – from the heyday of *Championship Manager* all the way through to the imminent release of *Football Manager Live*. And Miles is their main man...

Q So how is everything with FML at the moment? What's the buzz on it from players?

A It's all going pretty well. Beta Gameworld 4 has just opened, so it's quite hectic getting them up and running, and new features are going in thick and fast, whilst bug fixing too.

The buzz is really good – as long as people aren't going into it thinking it's online FM, they seem to really enjoy it, and word is certainly spreading amongst friends of those playing, judging by our bulging inboxes for people who want to be testing.

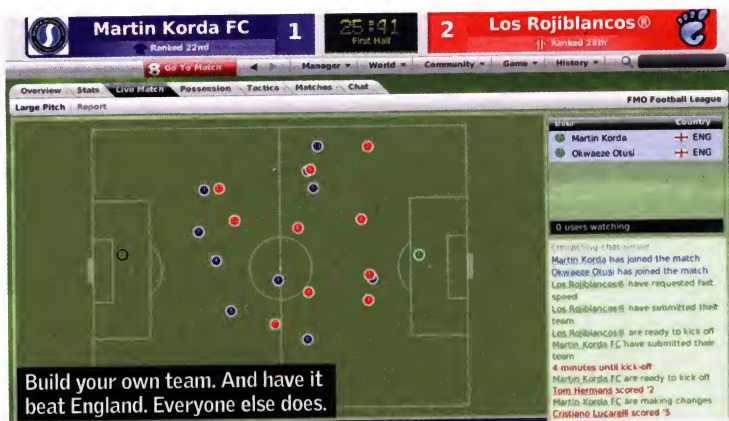
Have you introduced any game features you didn't expect after getting player feedback from the beta?

Loads. Acquisition fees, making the federations more important, team reputation, some match engine changes (for which the FML beta has been amazing), wizards, different game world sizes, rated goal clips, a feedback system. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Do you think there'd ever be a market for an SI online football game where you had to train your teams for weekly matches, as opposed to the instant ones FML caters for?

Yes – it's called *Football Manager 2008*, and is available from all good, and some bad, retailers now. You can play that online, and play proper seasons. If you mean spending the realtime week training players, for one match on a Saturday, then no, as I don't think there would be enough for people to do.

What's your own team called? How's it getting on?



Build your own team. And have it beat England. Everyone else does.

Caveman FC. Currently 23rd in Gameworld 2. I was in the top five, then fell over time to 200-odd, but have a squad that I'm happy with now, so will be trying to get higher next season, particularly after my recent Cup Winners Cup win. Not that I'm spending too much time playing the game and getting into it, or anything!

Does developing FML get a rivalry going in the SI offices?

There are a handful of very competitive people at SI who do tend to take it very seriously. There hasn't been a fight, but there have been people not communicating as freely as normal with others, and muttering rude words about people under their breath. Of course myself and Ov Collyer would never stoop that low, instead Ov will send an ingame message to everyone in the gameworld, then I'll have to retaliate in some way.



Football Manager goes MMO with FML.

tat Zone

Every day a chunk of tat the size of Scotland is breaking away from our continent of tat, and it's all thanks to the nefarious global warming. These tearaway tat tidbits float aimlessly across the sea and on to eBay, where, unless they're bid upon by you, they will clog up a cormorant's tail feathers, greatly reducing its ability to dance. You can stop this from happening by bidding on our tat for charity. Look for the 'PCZoners' tag on eBay, madam, and stay classy.

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk
All proceeds go to charity. Honest.
www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org



THIS MONTH'S TAT



JERICHO FINGER
A bagged finger in congealed blood – presumably inedible.



FOOTBALL MANAGER CUP
Because where else can you put your drinks?



RACE CAP
Helps you pretend to be Hamilton. Also includes free ginger hairs from Log.



GAMECOCKSUCKS.COM T-SHIRT
Sniggerable "Nobody will hardcore with me" top.

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	RACE JACKET Now people will think you work on a race track or something.	£11.61	8
	MORE TABULA RASA DOG TAGS Now if you die the doctor will send your corpse to Garriott.	£11.00	6
	TABULA RASA CUT-OUTS HAH! They weren't seven foot tall like we promised.	£6.00	8
	WORLD IN CONFLICT SKATEBOARD Use this to commit crimes. We compel you.	£26.00	6

Never seen you looking as lovely as you did tonight, never seen your tat so bright...

DISCOVER THE EARTH'S GREATEST SCI-FI AND FANTASY MAGAZINE!

SFX



2 DIFFERENT
COVERS
**ALIEN OR
PREDATOR**
WHICH ONE WILL
BE IN YOUR
FOIL BAG?

PLUS!
**HUGE FOIL
BATTLESTAR
GALACTICA
POSTER**



LATEST ISSUE OUT NOW!

WWW.SFX.CO.UK



PCZONE GAMES OF 2008

IF YOU THOUGHT 2007 saw the best that PC gaming can offer, then you're wrong, wrong, wrong.

Go outside now and flagellate yourself with a USB cable. Suitably admonished? Good, because here, packed into more than 40 pages, we have our massive preview of amazing games heading your way in 2008, featuring such treats as Valve's zombie shooter *Left 4 Dead*, the new *Command & Conquer* shooter spin-off *Tiberium* and the joys of *Far Cry 2*.

We also see the return of our mysterious *Mystic Will* (OK, it's obviously Porter), who will be turning over the gaming tarot cards to see – and hazard a guess at – what titles will be announced this year. So, settle down, rest those aching self-harmed limbs and suck up the gaming goodness...

Contents

- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|--|----|---|
| 24 | LEFT 4 DEAD | 47 | C&C3: KANE'S WRATH | 59 | MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES |
| 30 | STALKER: CLEAR SKY | 47 | WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR: SOULSTORM | 59 | SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION |
| 31 | RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2 | 47 | CODENÂME: PANZERS – COLD WAR | 60 | WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING |
| 31 | TUROK | 48 | SPACE SIEGE | 61 | WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING |
| 31 | THE CROSSING | 49 | SACRED 2 – FALLEN ANGEL | 62 | AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES |
| 32 | BORDERLANDS | 49 | RISE OF THE ARGONAUTS | 64 | FOOTBALL SUPERSTARS |
| 33 | DEUS EX 3 | 49 | DRAGON AGE | 64 | AION |
| 34 | DEAD ISLAND | 50 | EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR | 64 | GUILD WARS 2 |
| 36 | BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY | 52 | RACE DRIVER: GRID | | |
| 39 | PROJECT ORIGIN | 54 | FALLOUT 3 | | |
| 39 | FAR CRY 2 | 56 | LOST: THE VIDEO GAME | | |
| 39 | OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2: DRAGON RISING | 57 | POSTAL III | | |
| 40 | TIBERIUM | 57 | ASSASSIN'S CREED | | |
| 42 | MYSTIC WILL | 57 | MAFIA 2 | | |
| 46 | STARCRRAFT II | 58 | DEAD SPACE | | |
| 47 | SPORE | 59 | ALONE IN THE DARK | | |

Behold
the future



It's my job to do the game justice: to crowbar open your ribcage, straddle your chest, and punch your heart into your half-closed mouth



Left 4 Dead

The military will be here in two minutes, and *Jon Blyth* is covered in vomit

WEBSITE: www.l4d.com ETA: Q1

L EFT 4 DEAD has, in the year since its first announcement, been met with a barrage of pre-emptive plaudits. From the two hour queues at QuakeCon to play a beta, to the months-long salvo of previews that have had a steady trickle of journalists come away hugely impressed, and mostly with the frustrating confession that "no preview can do this game justice – you simply have to play it."

You can see my dilemma – to make this feature anything less than redundant, it's now my job to try and do the game justice: to run my fingers down your spine, crowbar open your ribcage, straddle your chest, and punch your heart into your half-closed mouth. I'll try my best, but if you find it difficult to conjure extreme emotions by reading about someone else playing a game, you can recreate the feeling of playing *Left 4 Dead* by simply writing an email describing how much you hate someone. Leave no aspect of their character unassassinated – really let rip. Then contrive to accidentally send the email to that person. The dread, palpitations and foul language that will result are identical. If you do this in a room full of people trying to murder you, the illusion will be complete.

Chet Faliszek, the game's writer and one of the funniest parts of the internet since it was all HotBots and AltaVistas, meets me in Valve's furry-strewn foyer. After a walk around the Left 4 Thanksgiving Valve offices – during which time I trade an alarmed glance with Gabe Newell

before burying my face shyly in a plush headcrab – I'm delivered to the playtesting room. Chet takes his place behind me, and he'll be offering me advice and information as I play through the new rural map, which culminates in a farmhouse stand-off surrounded by cornfields. It's classic, it's cliché, and it's five decent-sized stages away from the temporary campsite I find myself in now.

Like the other maps, each scenario is broken up into five large maps, punctuated by safe areas where you can reload, patch up and see who was letting the team down, in the form of stats, achievements and team betrayals.

KEITH RURAL

The new rural level has an extra layer of creepiness over the urban; it feels more open, and the brick of a city is always going to feel safer than a fading, endless forest. This is particularly true of a forest that generates zombies. Whereas the city level has a great line in claustrophobia, and keeps you on your toes with vertical combat, the cornfields level is that more fundamentally terrifying thing – a level where there is no safety, nothing to put your back against. It's especially true in the final dash through the cornfield, running nearly blind and just hoping that the zombies won't arrive before you get the doors closed. You never see them spawn (that would be shit) but they've got the uncanny ability to be suddenly there. For



Left 4 Dead encourages you to work together in the most sensible way possible: by killing anyone stupid enough to get stranded



"Don't move, or I'll blow your cuticles to kingdom come."

PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



The fact that they're not real zombies is scant comfort.

the living dead (pedants please read 'those infected with a horrible disease that turns them into cannibals') they've got a real dramatic flair.

Having been assured so many times that the gameplay was beyond the human capacity for description, my first thought was, this is pretty much what I expected. The four characters – John Everyman, Tattooed Biker, Freshly-Weathered Rich Girl and Grizzled Veteran – are unchanged, and are as much a part of zombie canon as putting too many vowels in the word 'brains'. They all play identically too, which'll reduce the bitching about who gets to play the cool biker.

The weapons range hasn't been extended, either – a choice of pipe bomb or molotov, SMG or shotgun, and a medkit each. It's certainly not the most expansive set of weapons, even with the auto shotgun, assault rifle and hunting rifle that become available at later checkpoints. But what did you want: bio-rifles and portal guns? *Left 4 Dead* keeps a tight focus on what it is; it doesn't need no stinkin' gadgets.

THE FRIENDLY SOCIETY

Co-op games often let you get away with letting you not play co-operatively. Larger group games all allow solo



The Director says you can have a little rest.

tacticians to profit from their lone heroics. *Left 4 Dead* encourages you to work together in the most sensible way possible: by killing anyone stupid enough to get stranded. Zombies can appear at every available entrance, necessitating someone to cover your back. The Smoker and Hunter have incapacitating attacks, forcing teammates to rescue their friends by getting close and slapping them off. You can revive fallen mates during their bleed-out time, but doing so incapacitates you for a short while: so should you? That depends: is the area clear? Are you sure? Are you covered by your other two friends? And most

importantly, has the clumsy prick been shooting you in the legs?

Left 4 Dead is not easy; viral armageddons so rarely are, as Noël Coward might say after a sip of tonic water. But it makes for some great moments of stress, drama, triumph and overwhelming failure. The dash for the safe holes with a gang of infected athletes chasing you down is pure *28 Days Later*, and the degree to which that feeling has been recreated in a game without any real script is incredible. It's all thanks to an awareness and love of modern zombie movies. And having lots of enemies.

Zombie checklist

Are the cannon fodder canon?

X A Zombie's Weak Spot Is The Brain
In *Left 4 Dead*, a bullet anywhere will kill a zombie. They do, however, fall over very slowly, causing you to waste ammo on an already dead undead dude.

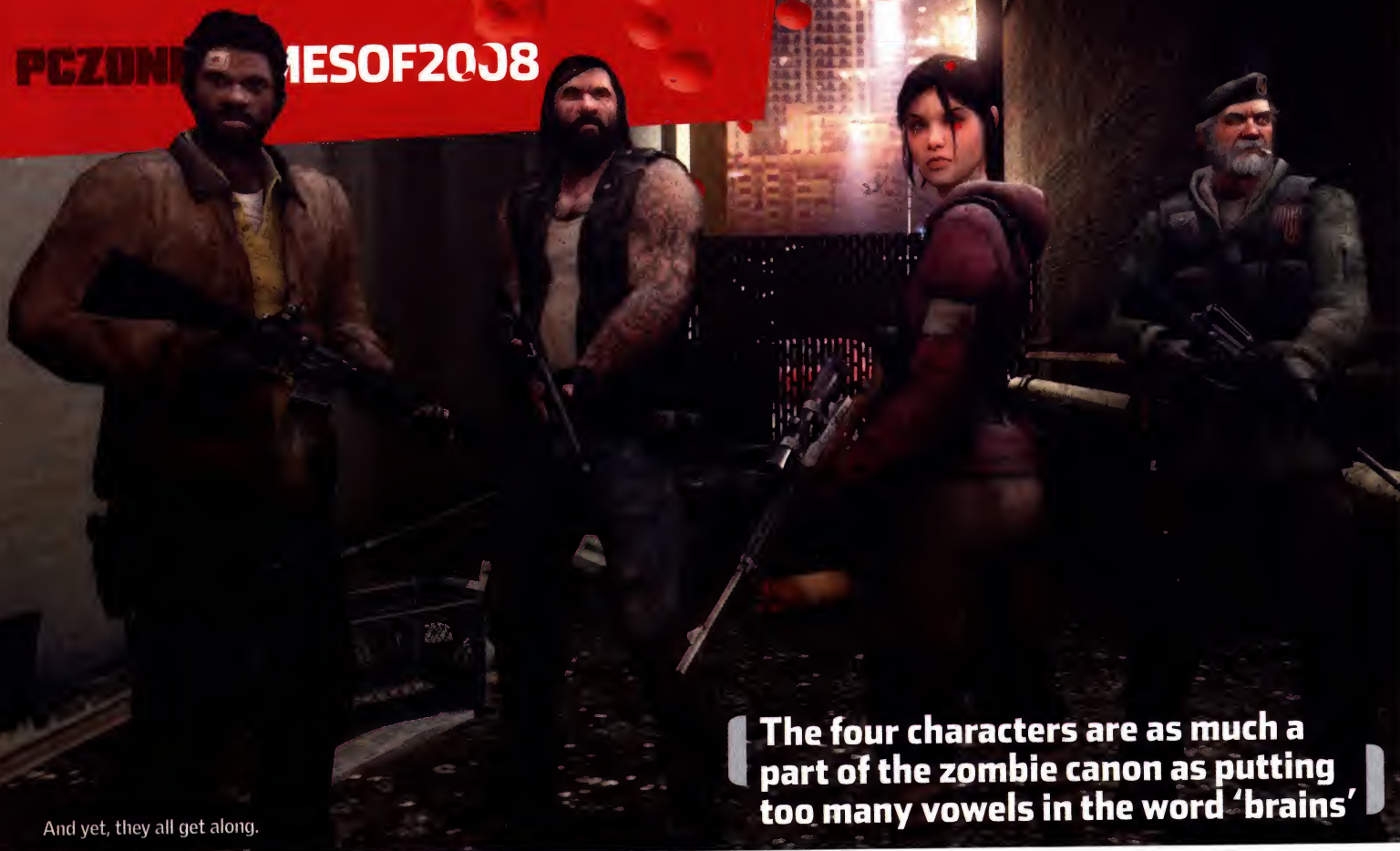
✓ Zombies Groan A Lot
They *do* groan. What's more, this lot groan with the voice of Faith No More frontman and sensationally extraordinary Mike Patton. You don't get grunts and groans any better than that.

X One Bite Means You're A Zombie
One bite means you've lost a bit of health. Even if you get knocked down, you get bleed time which allows you to shoot pistols from the floor, and should your bleed time run out, you'll be placed later on in the game for your friends to find.

✓ Zombies Can Run Nowadays
Danny Boyle invented running zombies, in a film which forces everyone to ask, "Who are the real zombies: the humans or the zombies?" before going "The zombies are the zombies, and any similarity to humans is simply a lame-listed metaphor."

X If Your Wife Turns Into A Zombie, She'll Stop You From Killing Her By Saying Your Name Immediately Before Turning Back Into A Zombie And Then You Shoot Her
This doesn't happen at all in *Left 4 Dead*.





And yet, they all get along.

The four characters are as much a part of the zombie canon as putting too many vowels in the word 'brains'

Go team!

How those Super Zombies will force you into working together



THE SMOKER

The Smoker's cloud is claustrophobic and pitch black, although it doesn't cover a large area, and gunfire makes it flash yellow in a manner that is blinding even if you're just close to the smoke. Plus, if the bugger loops you with his 50ft tongue, you've only got a second to shoot him off, otherwise one of your mates will have to rescue you.



THE HUNTER

The Hunter jumps around like a spring-loaded shitbag, and if he gets too close to you he'll knock you to the floor and wail on you. Just like the Smoker's tongue, you'll need a friend to release you. The Hunter has an attack-and-retreat style of play, and is the one I grew to hate, and waste most ammo on.



THE BOOMER

The Boomer is your *Doom 3* fat zombie, only more pustule-ridden and completely explosive. It's not much of a life, to be honest. Walking around, puking on people (once puked on, the hordes of infected will home in on you), and exploding the second someone shoots you. Still, who am I to judge? I'm sure some Boomers live very happy lives.



THE TANK

The closest the game has to a boss, everything tends to go a little bit quiet before a Tank turns up. Then his theme tune kicks in, and it's up to everyone to focus their attentions on him. Working together, he's manageable – but one or two people will quickly find themselves buried under his charge attacks and the ground he slings at you.



THE WITCH

The Witch forces everyone to stop firing, turn off their flashlights and get to an area where they can start defending themselves against the regular infected again. Basically she shits you up more than *F.E.A.R.*'s Alma ever could, because she's not a tarted-up cutscene. She'll tear your soul apart, baby.

Take one moment, when a Boomer had vomited on my friend, and the regurgitated pheromones had turned him into a zombie magnet. He crouched, allowing me to pick off the zombies without puncturing his cheeks, and between us, we killed them. What I hadn't noticed was that a queue of zombies had formed behind me, trying to get to my vomit-sodden chum. My monitor was completely and suddenly full of zombie. Lunging, ash-grey zombies, as close as they could be to my face without the whole thing feeling erotic.

I'm almost tired of saying and thinking "it's like a bloody movie" – I don't think I've heard anyone saying "it's like a movie" about something that so obviously isn't a movie since 9/11 – but this is possibly what people have been struggling to get across; the reason people are saying you have to play it to feel it. Because The Director manipulates your emotions to the point where you're glad to stop playing, open the curtains and rest your dilated pupils. But the options play through your mind, the missed opportunities, the room for improvement. And you want to play another game right away.

THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

Have I introduced you to The Director? You've possibly heard about him; he's the playful AI mastermind that'll be toying with your adrenaline levels. Given that zombie hordes don't have much intelligence to draw on – uncuddly noggin chompers that they are – the

cleverness lies in their deployment, which is governed by The Director. No area is safe, and no area is a guaranteed carnage bomb, so you can never be sure around which corner, or from which patch of forest the hordes will come. Instead of scripted moments, the game decides what to do based on preceding events, so you'll end up forced to trust your sense of dramatic timing, rather than map memory.

If you've just had a prolonged onslaught of hell's overspill, then The Director will loosen the thumbscrews, and give you some dramatic respite. If that sounds generous, it's not. Your nervous system may have briefly jammed *Left 4 Dead's* shredding machine, but the machine's still plugged in. Once The Director reckons you've had time to calm down, on they come.

The exact algorithms are, of course, a mystery; all I can pass on is that in its current state, it gives you an excellent sine wave of stress, and is – yes, yes I know – as much like a bloody film as any game without cutscenes, a script or sweeping aerial shots of Cardiff can be.

The music is an important part of that film-like experience, and smart players will take cues from the heralds. The Tank has a particularly dramatic theme tune that warns everyone that the game's superpowered bullet sponge is on the way. Rather than ruining the surprise (how much fun would that surprise be, anyway?) it gives you and your team a chance to organise, to regroup, and to focus your firepower. The Tank will

PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



Lucio Fulci it ain't.



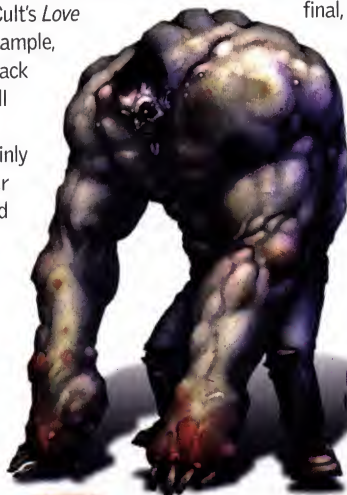
Cornfields: where zombies build their nests.



I'd shoot sooner rather than later, mate.

screw you over unless you're all working together to chip away at his hit points.

Behind the music is Mike Morasky, a prolific musical genius whose career spans many groups and styles. However, there's a golden thread of churning atmosphere running through much of his back-catalogue. Play *Left 4 Dead* while listening to Milk Cult's *Love God* album, for example, and the journey back to inner peace will be a difficult one, characterised mainly by scratching your own forearms and glancing at the doors. His *L4D* score is less experimental, but thanks to the clues it gives you about what might be around the next corner,



it's plugged just as directly into your emotional response centres.

While we're on the subject of prolific and uncomfortable musical legends, the experimentalist Mike Patton voiced the infected. *Portal* fans with a love of Patton's side projects may also be aware that he voiced the gibbering of GLaDOS's final, angry orb. Cool? Not much.

SHIT! WITCH!

"Turn your flashlight off! Don't look at the witch!", commands Chet. The Witch is the game's *Ring* piece, a sobbing girl who only surfaces from her lachrymose reveries to rip you apart with one hit. For that reason, it's considered prudent not to shine your torch on her, or shoot her. I reply that I want to look at the Witch. I'm supposed to

be writing about the Witch, and I'd look like a proper 'nana if I came back from Seattle to write "I didn't want to look at the Witch because she was a bit scary". So I snuck a crafty sideways glance at the slouchy mare, just as a teammate let rip with a volley of machine gun fire.

I'm not sure if this was simply to show off her powers, but it certainly had that effect. Sobs became a crescendo of screams, and the inert girl who wouldn't have looked out of place keeping a YouTube vlog began killing us. The guy who'd shot the gun was the first to go, but she came after me straight after, perhaps in payback for my crafty glancing. Everyone else had run off by this stage, leaving me with about 20 seconds of bleed-out time to stare at the now-purposeless Witch, who resumed a kind of hopeless, agonised writhing which would have looked pitiful if she hadn't just butchered me.

Eventually, players will be able to play as the Super-Infected, but that's not

being shown to critical journalists at this point. In dead mode, however, I did get to see what it might be like; letting my camera follow a Boomer, I saw whole areas of the map invisible to the living players, with short cuts to facilitate ambushes – even a couple of inert regular infected zombies. *Portal*'s Kim Swift mentioned that she enjoyed playing the Infected most of all, and it looks like it might be slightly more challenging. While there's less of a definitive sense of victory, it's sure to offer plenty of big dumb fun for people who love to ruin other people's games.

It feels like I could write forever; but time, word limits, and the scowls of a production editor who's married a deadline mean I have to stop now. Do I think I've managed to get across the experience of playing the game? Of course not. The best I can hope for is to get across how much I enjoyed it – and try to infect you with my impatience for the final game's release. **PCZ**



Clear Sky's settings are urban and rural, often at the same time!



The new Red Forest area is characteristically battle-scarred.

STALKER: Clear Sky

"There's a storm coming" mutters *Will Porter*. Despite all signs to the contrary

WEBSITE: www.stalker-game.com ETA: Q2

THERE'S NO DOUBT about it. 2008 is the year of the free-form shooter, with *Far Cry 2* and GSC Game World's *Clear Sky* leading the charge.

A prequel to *Shadow of Chernobyl*, *Clear Sky* begins in radioactive bogs and progresses over a mix of terrain either entirely new or cleverly remodelled from the original. The game not only includes *STALKER* features first coded way back in 2003 (and then cruelly excised), but brings an entirely new dynamic to the wastes.



Reminiscent of south London.

"Once you decide to go join your chosen faction, you'll open up lots of new gameplay possibilities," explains GSC frontman Oleg Yavorsky. "Each faction has a main base where a number of characters are encountered, such as clan leader, trader, mechanic. Each faction possesses unique information, missions, weapons, equipment, upgrades and the like."

And so the A-life brains within each gang of gasmask-wearing miscreants will wage endless war over territory, resources and scientific outposts. The more of these your faction is able to capture, the more grunts you'll be able to enlist and the better the tech you'll have access to. Importantly, if you want to screw your lot over then there's nothing stopping you. "No-one can stop you sending your faction to hell," nods Oleg. "This is the Ukraine – for the right amount of dosh you can do anything!"

Wage endless war over territory, resources, and scientific outposts

One of the main things GSC are drizzling into the game code at the moment, though, is improved combat AI – improving your foe's know-how when it comes to taking cover, the ability to carry pistols and equipment in separate hands, and a far greater capacity for flushing you out of cover with grenades. And, of course those interface improvements the first game begged for, plus a revamped weapon system and far more refined techniques of artefact search, retrieval and application. Major time is also being spent on polishing all-new locations such as the Red Forest (seen here for the first time in return for a plug for Yavorsky's Ukrainian death metal band Firelake) and the lost city of Limansk.

"Limansk was a sealed-off scientific town, where secret government programs were developed," explains our man Oleg. "It's fully autonomous and somewhere in it there's an extensive network of underground laboratories."

What's more it's something of an Exclusion Zone hot potato since recent fallout has rendered it a path to the reactor – making it a hub of conflict between the prime rivals that are the Freedom and Duty factions. Add to this an increase of danger, scorched earth and oddly truncated greenery in existing areas and *Clear Sky* could take the dark horse that was *STALKER* and make something even more fascinating.

Rainbow Six: Vegas 2

Barry Manilow tickets on stand-by...

WEBSITE: rainbowsixgame.uk.ubi.com/vegas ETA: March

CONVENIENTLY TYING INTO the tenth anniversary of the *Rainbow Six* games, until it inevitably slips, Ubisoft are taking their own brand of squad violence back to Sin City. Currently boasting 'better graphics!', 'better multiplayer!' and 'better levels!' – it's more likely to be 'more of the same!' with 'less dull bits that aren't actually in Vegas!'

Still, the Nevada pleasure capital remains a thoroughly engaging city to blow up – and there are a ton of real-life casinos and bars ripe for the plunder in terms of design inspiration.

Details remain slim on the actual plotline, but we can all-but guarantee that hostages will be taken, money will spill metaphorically from smashed fruit machines and neon lighting will be decisively smashed. Presumably there'll be no authentic recreation of the prostitute adverts that litter every piece of pavement in real-life Vegas, nor enough roller-coasters, but you can't have everything.



One way to get noticed by the bartender.

Turok

French for 'you are great', apparently

WEBSITE: www.turok.com ETA: February

A NEW DEVELOPER and publisher for gaming's famous dinosaur hunter, and *Turok* has the potential to be a decent (if console-heavy) shooter. As ex-commando Joseph Turok, you have to hunt down your black ops mentor on a planet teeming with flesh-eating reptiles.

You can play through the levels stealthily, with the knife or bow for example, or go in

dual guns blazing, but the AI will react accordingly, whether they be giant dinosaurs or evil soldier henchmen dudes.

With the ancient *Trespasser* still the only touchstone for a decent dino-shooter on PC you can't deny it has potential. Lush forests, beefy weapons and plenty of the trademark gore – fans could be, wait for it, in "T-rextasy". See what we did there?

Above a 38-inch waist and they start to have problems.



The Crossing

Or, perhaps, 'One Fight in Paris'

WEBSITE: www.arkane-studios.com ETA: TBA

SET IN A clash between two parallel realities, one a violence-ridden Parisian nightmare and the other a France in which the Templars came into power in the Middle Ages, *The Crossing* is doing interesting stuff with multiplayer without jumping on the co-op bandwagon.

This is down to letting you play within someone else's single-player adventure

(adding human smarts to the usually AI-led grunts he faces *Left 4 Dead* style), or even having you traverse full-on battles between other players while on your solo adventure.

Known by the developers as 'Cross play' it's a concept as exciting as it must be impossible to code. Still, it's backed up by the fact that it includes grappling hooks. And everyone loves grappling hooks.



Borderlands

In a distant time and far away place, a worried *Will Porter* floats deep in space

WEBSITE: www.borderlandsthegame.com ETA: Q3

THE MOST EXCITING thing about *Borderlands* is that it's very similar to the '80s space western cartoon *BraveStarr*. In fact, apart from the notable absence of Confederate little people in smocks and sentient, anthropomorphic robot horses, *Borderlands* is just like it – but with more extreme violence. The second most exciting thing about it is that it's a little bit like the ill-fated *Firefly* TV series as well. With that in mind, let us proceed.

Much as in *Pitch Black*, if you'll forgive a third comparison, the concept is that mankind has settled on a seemingly unoccupied planet (bar the rumoured alien technology that lies beneath its arid surface), but unfortunately they've just turned up at the wrong time of year. Come this planet's long-awaited spring equinox, things are going to get a little more crowded when the hungry aliens awaken and attack, with elephants that have faces like lady bits and are actually hives for flying red dragons leading the charge.

The game's set-up is one of linear plot missions, often issued by the Mayor of Newhaven, a sultry femme fatale with 'Two Face' scarring down her phizog, and a raft of side-quests that see you clearing out alien caves, searching for valuable kit or dealing with troublesome bandits. You'll be accompanied by an odd lady called Lilith who's become a smidge infected by alien powers beyond our ken, a hunter called Mordecai who's turned a local beast into a loyal pet, and a man with a computer in his brain called Roland – much like Daryl from oft-forgotten '80s flick *D.A.R.Y.L.* only with guns (and that's the last comparison).

In many ways this is a slight variant on the *STALKER* model – albeit without quite as much AI cleverness or that strange tendency to swamp you with fear in the manner of Douglas Adams' Total Perspective Vortex (OK, that really was the last comparison).

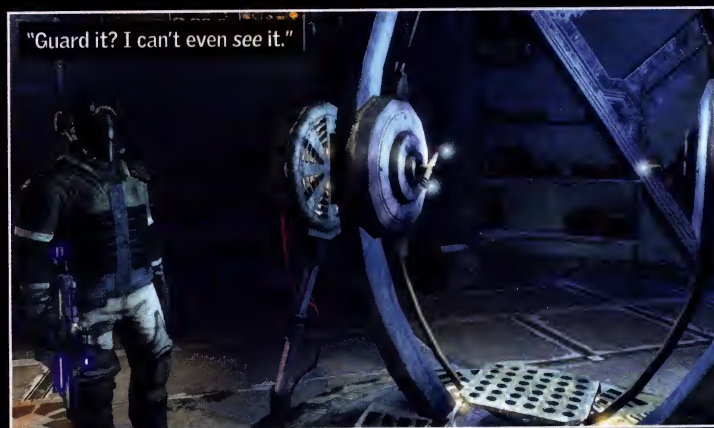
With four player co-op, an intriguing mix of scripting and random encounters, chasing bugs across vast alien plains, a

Things are going to get more crowded when hungry aliens awaken to attack

bazillion different weapons (seriously: a bazillion – ridiculous but true), it's a riveting opportunity to take the FPS to a new and interesting place. True, the driving sections look as if they might be better at home on a console, but the

frontier ambience is nothing but a winner.

But why call a newfound planet that you're digging holes in 'Pandora'? Do these future-colonials know nothing of Greek mythology?





Box of limbs – only five quid.

Nanotech isn't popular in *Deus Ex 3*.



Deus Ex 3

Jamie Sefton gets excited about the return of nanotechnology's finest

HALLELUJAH! *DEUS EX 3* has now finally been officially announced, although the rumours of a proper third instalment of Ion Storm's sci-fi RPG/shooter series were rife in 2007 after a series of comments by Eidos' Gallic counterparts in France and Montreal. A promo movie was released just before Christmas – but what do we actually know about *Deus Ex 3*?



Not as popular as a *Big Brother* vote.



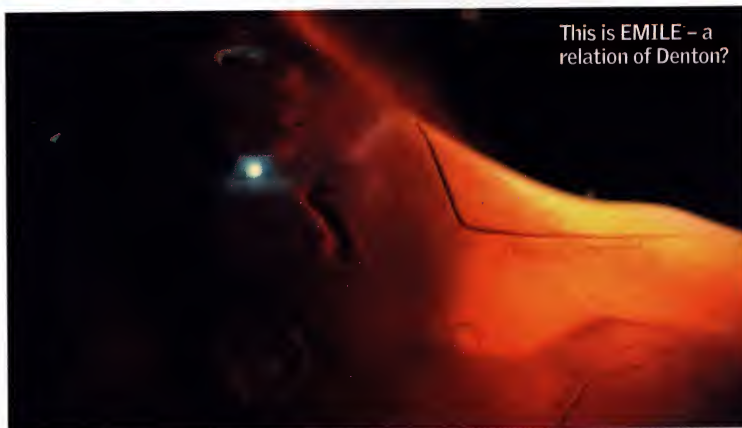
Augmented babies – the future.



Games journos get this treatment.

Eidos – cock this up and you die.

Who we are is but a stepping stone to what we can become.



This is EMILE – a relation of Denton?

1 Deus Ex 3

This is proudly *Deus Ex 3* not '*Deus Ex: A New Beginning*' – it's a proper third game, showing the unfettered ambition of developers Eidos Montreal.

2 Hello BioShock

Deus Ex 3 will be a multi-format game. We're confident Eidos will have learned what can go wrong after the dumbed-down experience of *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, and instead make a sophisticated gaming experience that both console and PC owners can enjoy.

3 Prequelitis

An image from the low-res *DX3* movie (absent from the hi-def version) shows someone casting a vote in a box saying 'Biopolitic Vote 2027'. *Deus Ex* was set in 2054 and *Invisible War* in 2074, so is this a prequel?

4 EMILE

The robotic foetus is called 'EMILE' and it may be the first augmented human to be created. The trailer also hints at public unrest, showing riot police and signs saying "We do not welcome augmented people here", suggesting a theme of intolerance à la *X-Men*. Other images include a nanotechnology-filled female embracing an entirely biological male, again alluding to an earlier clash of science and morality.

5 Endings

Another possibility for the setting of the new game is that *Deus Ex 3* is set in a universe based on one of the

endings from *Invisible War*, where the Templars are attempting to wipe out nanotechnology augmentation by dictatorial means.

6 Development team

We can confirm that Eidos have been in discussions with at least one ex-developer of *Deus Ex 1* and *2* about the possibility of further involvement.

7 Themes

"Who we are is but a stepping stone to what we can become." This theme of progressive human development is echoed in other images from the game's trailer, including Da Vinci's human anatomy drawings, and the Greek letter 'phi', the symbol for the mathematical marvel the Golden Ratio.

8 Music

The soundtrack of the promo movie is a remixed version of the original *Deus Ex* theme tune.

9 Engine

The game is to be built on the *Tomb Raider: Legend* engine, presumably improved and updated to reflect the standards of the futuristic world we live in. Or not.

10 2008?

Deus Ex 3 is part of our 2008 round-up, but the game is still very early in development, so it's a very real possibility that we're looking at a 2009 release. We'll have an exclusive first look at *Deus Ex 3* in a future *PC ZONE*.



Dead Island

Jamie Sefton forgets Club 18-30 and books a package tour in a completely different resort from hell...

WEBSITE: www.deadislandgame.com ETA: 2008

NOPE, *DEAD ISLAND* isn't the latest ITV reality show for necrophiliacs – this is a new survival horror from the makers of half-decent cowboy shooter *Call of Juarez*. Kind of a bloodthirsty *Far Cry*-meets-*Lost*-meets-*Resident Evil*, *Dead Island* is set on a tropical paradise that inexplicably becomes a holiday haven for a different kind of evil tourist that likes to eat brains (and put their towels by the pool at sunrise – probably).

After a plane bringing you and your wife to the island crashes, you wake up on a beach, alone, with only a huge array of weaponry for company, as you begin your desperate and frightening search for your beloved. *Dead Island* is a free-roaming game, so it's up to you how you proceed and where you go, whether it's straight into the nearby hotel complex to check in and headshot a half-naked zombie sunbather or trek into the tropical forest for a nice bit of sightseeing and undead immolation.

"There'll be a lot of different environment settings, interiors and outdoors with challenging landscapes," says product manager Marcin Pióro. "We've designed a huge, realistic-looking tropical island with roads, infrastructure, marinas, pool bars and a dynamically changing ecosystem that reacts to the spreading of a zombie epidemic. You have the option to backtrack to previous locations to complete tasks that you didn't complete, or plough on ahead."

FREE YOUR BRAINS

Dead Island will feature a whole army of undead nasties, from the lurching, moaning classic species from George Romero's movies, to the fast-moving monstrosities like those in the 2004 remake of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, all controlled by a planned AI system (or rather an 'Advanced Artificial Life System' as developer Techland would have it) that will create spontaneous individual and group behaviour.

"The zombie's main aim is to find food – well, flesh – human flesh at best. They've got some memories of their previous human life, which is why

you can find them around the places where they used to hang around, like hotels," continues Pióro.

"You can also take advantage of the zombies' primal instincts to take out tougher non-zombie enemies. For example, you can act like bait and gather a few slow zombies to follow you and let them do their thing with an opponent you can't handle by yourself."

This ability to use the environment and AI to your advantage has been used most recently in *STALKER* and *BioShock*, and again, your choice of allies in *Dead Island* will ultimately affect the storyline and finale.

"Yes, there are role-playing elements, with dialogue choices, interactions with NPCs and side quests. The non-linear gameplay means you'll have a lot of choices to make, different tasks to accept, some of which will help or harm you, and every completed quest will have an effect on the game world."

However, for me the most exciting aspect of *Dead Island* is the amount of gore and blood-splattering that'll be present, with a detailed damage model for violent zombie kills of the *Soldier of Fortune* variety. So when you smash a

"There will be things far more hideous than zombie women in bikinis"

Marcin Pióro promises scary things in *Dead Island*

PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



Ibiza's gone downhill.

baseball bat into a zombie's chest, you'll see its rib cage cave in from the blow.

Techland are describing *Dead Island* as a 'first-person melee' game rather than an FPS because you can pick up and use objects to kill the undead around you – not unlike Capcom's excellent *Dead Rising* zombie-in-the-mall game on the Xbox 360.

"We assume that you will fight with everything you find and what you can handle to carry," says Pióro excitedly. "For example when you are in the jungle you can find a branch or rock, in the hotel kitchen you can pick up a frying pan or a meat cleaver.

"Although we're focused on melee fighting rather than shooting, there will of course be guns on the island, but the combat system also gives you

the chance to take advantage over the opponents by using the environment. Places like pools filled with water, electric fences, gas supplies and so on provide great opportunities to deploy traps – and you can also combine those elements."

DEAD FUN

So what about multiplayer? Well, with Valve and Turtle Rock's amazing-looking *Left 4 Dead* being released early in 2008, plans are in place for co-op play mode (although not in the single-player storyline unfortunately) and some other surprises, as Techland "don't want to make another standard multiplayer shooter."

Dead Island is a fantastic premise for a game, although it's too early to tell



Maybe a strong sun cream?



"Yep, I think there's an eyelash in there..."



Lovely day for the apocalypse.

whether the developers have bitten off more flesh than they can chew with the ambitious free-roaming levels, emergent gameplay, interactive environments and gore physics that accurately simulate injuries from different sources.

One thing they're sure of though, is how scary the game will be: "There will be things far more hideous than zombie women in bikinis." **PCZ**

Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway

Doing his best to avoid directly quoting AC/DC, *Will Porter* puts his love into you

WEBSITE: www.brothersinarmsgame.com ETA: March



The new bazooka team conjures up all manner of destructive options.

WHEREAS FORMER *BROTHERS in Arms* games focussed on victorious moments in World War II, *Hell's Highway* concentrates on Operation Market Garden: the last major Allied defeat in World War II.

"In the first game it was like the first *Star Wars*, with Carantan like the Death Star where all the Rebels band together," explains head of Gearbox Randy Pitchford. "This story is more like *The Empire Strikes Back*. The bad guys are on top. It is not a good day for the Allies."

This is a somewhat grounding statement after sitting through the tales of Gearbox's developers interviewing gruff veterans and seeing them break down in tears.

Market Garden was an attempt by the Allies to gain a fast route into German territory to end the war quickly and

It became blindingly clear that this is not a re-invention of the wheel

efficiently – sending paratroopers and gliders over the frontline in an attempt to secure roads (including what became known as the Hell's Highway) and bridges (including that famous Bridge Too Far) to allow for a high-speed armoured advance to Berlin.

Despite some valiant holding out against enemy forces, defeats along the line meant relief for the furthest-flung troops never came and many lives were lost. It's into this maelstrom that returning hero Matt Baker (you) is flung at the start of the game, and as the head of a reconnaissance team you'll get to see a number of this event's hotspots.

SLIGHT RETURN

Let's get this over with: right at the start of my time with the game it became blindingly clear that this is not a re-invention of the wheel – it's another *Brothers in Arms* game. Yes, it's easier to shoot the Hun. Yes, cover is now destructible. Yes, garden furniture can

now be vaulted with finesse. But if you weren't convinced on the last two tours of duty then the third iteration will find it hard to snap you to attention. This is fine for me though, as I see the franchise as much a high-risk puzzle game as a balls-out shooter and enjoy the games more than my peers.

As usual, the tale is told with a stab at panache, opening in a burning hospital in the fire-bombed city of Eindhoven with events that take place two-thirds of the way into the game proper. Something dreadful has happened, one of your blokes has been shot up, and as you progress through the building (alongside handy tutorial reminders of how to shoot people) it becomes more and more evident that Baker is a little unhinged by affairs, and is imagining stuff. Just when you're noticing how lovely the wafts of smoke emanating from your gun and the tinkling of bullet casings is though, you're thrown back in time and to a British airstrip before all the incursion began.

Again, this is a *BIA* game so it looks like some of the rather more cloying dialogue and slightly top-heavy matey rambunctious is returning. Indeed, it now includes a young soldier who's too young to be there but has been included at Baker's request (who might as well have a sign next to him reading 'Shoot me!') and an English bloke who has lines like "You don't know bollocks!". It's a Louisiana Action Man tea party and every stereotype seems to have been invited.

CUT ENGINES

Soon though, you're in the front seat of a glider wafting into enemy territory with orders to group up,



There's inevitably a bit more human tragedy amid the urban combat.



Good job Holland has convenient walls.



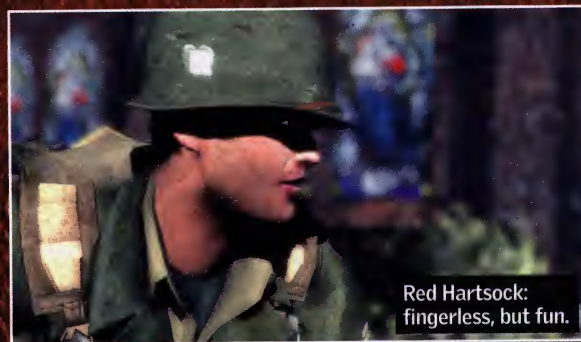
Thatched roofs – a treat for Nazi flammenwerfers.

There are definite nods to *BIA*'s lower-brow squad shooter rivals

"Crap. There goes my lift home..."



Hell's Highway: fan pleaser, but unlikely to win over its doubters.



Red Hartsock: fingerless, but fun.

and meet up with the Resistance and protect other landing sites from the roused German forces. So once again, you're ordering machine gun teams or three man assault teams behind cover and to suppress enemy forces, as you creep behind carts and haystacks with an eye to flanking your opponents. Levels may be authentically designed, but top-down they're still a sequence of metal tubs and fences designed with your progress and enemy AI funnelling in mind.

A key twist to the *BIA* template is that cover is now breakable – sheltering behind the metal hulk of a delivery van caused a shock when the doors fell off – and you can order your blokes to destroy any cover your foes might be hiding behind too.

Now I wouldn't describe this as being watered down, the ethos of the game is still there bold as brass, but there are definite nods to *BIA*'s lower-brow squad shooter rivals. Primarily, there's a new third-person view for when you dig in behind cover that's a little *Gears of War*-esque (and perhaps needless) and a *Rainbow Six*: Vegas-inspired red tinge around your surroundings when you're in danger. There's also more scripting built to fit alongside the AI machinations – like the fantastic moment in which I'd placed my men either side of a country track and Germans marched over the crest of a nearby hill and directly between my gunners.

Is this a case of a square peg trying to fit in a star (and stripe) shaped hole? Maybe.

Nevertheless, to a *Brothers in Arms* fan such as myself, the traditional formula shines through in a game that's not only prettier than earlier incarnations, but also rid of some of the series' more pernicky hang-ups over inaccurate aiming and poor interaction with the environment.

Hell's Highway won't top *Call of Duty 4* for the wargame of choice, but will once again provide a cerebral alternative to its balls-out lunacy. **PCZ**



It isn't all fields and farmhouses...

Could this be the only World War II shooter this year?



Project Origin

Lots of bad men and a little lady

WEBSITE: www.projectorigingame.com ETA: Q3

Project Origin is the sequel to F.E.A.R. in everything but name, and is promised to deliver more sophisticated shocks alongside more open environments and fewer samey bad guys.

In fact, we managed to snaffle the designs of two of these new soon-to-be-penetrated beasts for our 2008 preview – one a three-fingered, high-kicking assassin with a toad-face, and the other the ultra-stretchy, wall-walking long-jump expert that is the abomination you trail after in the game's opening hospital level. Also on show is the interior of the APC which will very you and your fellow Deltas from exciting new location to exciting new location.

With an acute awareness of exactly what was top-drawer material in F.E.A.R., and an admission of what stuff belonged in the bottom, Monolith could be about to secure their position as one of the US's most prestigious shooter-houses.



PCZONE
GAMES OF
2008



Delta Force chums pose in their inter-mission APC.



One way to relieve A&E waiting times.

Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising

War never changes until the sequel

WEBSITE: www.codemasters.com/flashpoint2 ETA: Q4

CURRENTLY FEATHERING ITS nest with engine-refinements before presenting itself to the world in its full-motion glory, Operation Flashpoint 2 could be the most hardcore military sim we've seen in years.

Developed a world away from Op Flash's former home at Czech outfit Bohemia, Dragon Rising's intent is to dazzle with

authenticity and convey the terror, chaos and occasional stark beauty of modern warfare within a clash of civilizations on an oil-rich island to the north of Korea.

Huge pillars of black smoke, long-range barrages, and beautiful free-form environments to risk your life in against life-like military AI are promised in a game that sounds almost too good to be true.



Landmines are hard on rabbits.



"Anyone read smoke signals?"

Far Cry 2

Carver: out. Island: out. Gazelles: in

WEBSITE: farcry.ubi.com ETA: Q2

WITHIN AN ALMOST empty African state (where the way of the gun has forced its inhabitants to run for the borders) it's just you, countless warlords and their strongholds, lots of herbivores, some gliders and 50km² of free-roaming joy to play with.

We're yet to see just how varied missions will be, but the sheer ambition of the game

and outright beauty of the engine and its realistic weather systems is less out of Africa, and more out of this world.

Even better, right now it's marked down as a PC-only release, despite the torrent of 360-friendly titles that will inevitably fall in its wake.

Mark our words, Far Cry 2 is the brightest prospect for first-person shooting in 2008. Who thought we'd ever say that?



You'll be able to get some great poaching mods come FC2's release.

Tiberium

Will Porter blissfully rolls around in a field of poisonous green crystals, unaware of his burning hands and feet

WEBSITE: www.commandandconquer.com ETA: TBA

SET A DECADE after the events of *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars*, *Tiberium* is a squad shooter in which you lead GDI forces into battle around towering structures that you're usually content to stare down upon in your status as an RTS commander. The abject failure of *Renegade* seems to have been relegated into history, as the chaps at EA code a game that fulfils every Westwood fanboy's wildest dream.

Little has leaked about this one – but you will definitely be in control of a GDI squad with a multitude of familiar units at your beck and call. Sadly, at the time of writing, there's no word on whether the GDI campaign will be balanced by that of the Nod, nor whether missions will be intercut by Hollywood-heavy FMVs. Its place in the C&C timeframe, however, is ripe for action.

The plot is likely to revolve around the last remaining gigantic threshold tower built by alien-race the Scrin that Kane just happens to know the password to – and GDI efforts to thwart his plans to learn more about Tiberium and subsequently take over the universe. The Scrin themselves, currently plotting full-scale invasion in the depths of space, are also dead certs for the game.

But just imagine standing on a battlefield with Harvesters thundering past, or being ferried around in an Orca, or even storming a Hand of Nod training facility and having a poke around what's inside. Exciting is not the word. **PCZ**



PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



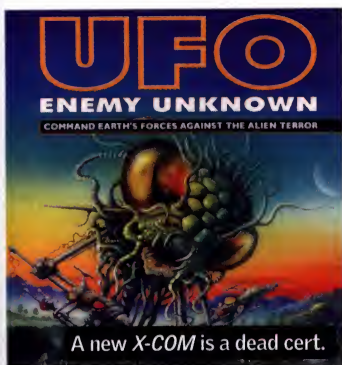


Mystic Will





Nomad might actually finish the job in part two...



A new X-COM is a dead cert.



Garrett: born to taff.



predicts...

Cursed by foresight envied in the halls of the very gods, 'Mystic' Will Porter lays down the cards that reveal the unavoidable fate of PC gaming



MAX PAYNE 3

Not in development at Remedy, but certainly one of the games that 3D Realms have waiting in the wings for their forthcoming push to reclaim gaming credibility. I mean, could there conceivably be a Mark Wahlberg *Payne* movie without a game? Expect it to be back to basics – the 'film noir love story' angle abjectly failed to convert to sales last time around. Seeing as most of the supporting cast died in the last game (Woden, Vlad, the police chief and, I suppose, Mona), they can start from a relatively clean slate. Or perhaps a prequel?



GARRETT RETURNS

As we all know, *Deus Ex 3* is in development at Eidos Montreal. You'll find more on that elsewhere, but what of the game they have stacked up behind it in the development cycle?

I would be gobsmacked if it wasn't a *Thief* game. Not only would it be easy to

trade stealth-centric developers between *Deus Ex* and a new Garrett adventure, but it's a revered franchise. And Eidos don't have enough of those to treat it lightly. Confirmation will be announced or leaked before the end of the year.



X-COM REBIRTH

It's widely known that Irrational (or 2K Boston as business people would have us call them) are beavering away at an *X-COM* game. It's something young Steve Hogarty partly discovered on a *BioShock* trip when a developer told him they were working on a "much-loved franchise" that formerly had "a crappy interface". An accidental leak on a law firm's website revealed this was *X-COM*. As such, a *SWAT 4*-style co-op shooter set in underwater bases, darkened silos and military installations is a dead cert. But do you know the machinations behind



Max Payne will return. But is Mona dead? Probably...

2K's nabbing of the *X-COM* licence? Well, *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, along with some other former MicroProse titles, was bought up long ago by *Civilization* developers Firaxis. When Firaxis became part of the 2K publishing empire, 2K passed the *X-COM* torch to their irrational Bostonians. Firaxis had spoken of doing their own, presumably turn-based, *X-COM* game – and the spookily familiar format of the Afterworld mod in *Civ 4: Beyond the Sword* solidifies the chances of a traditional *X-COM* emerging.

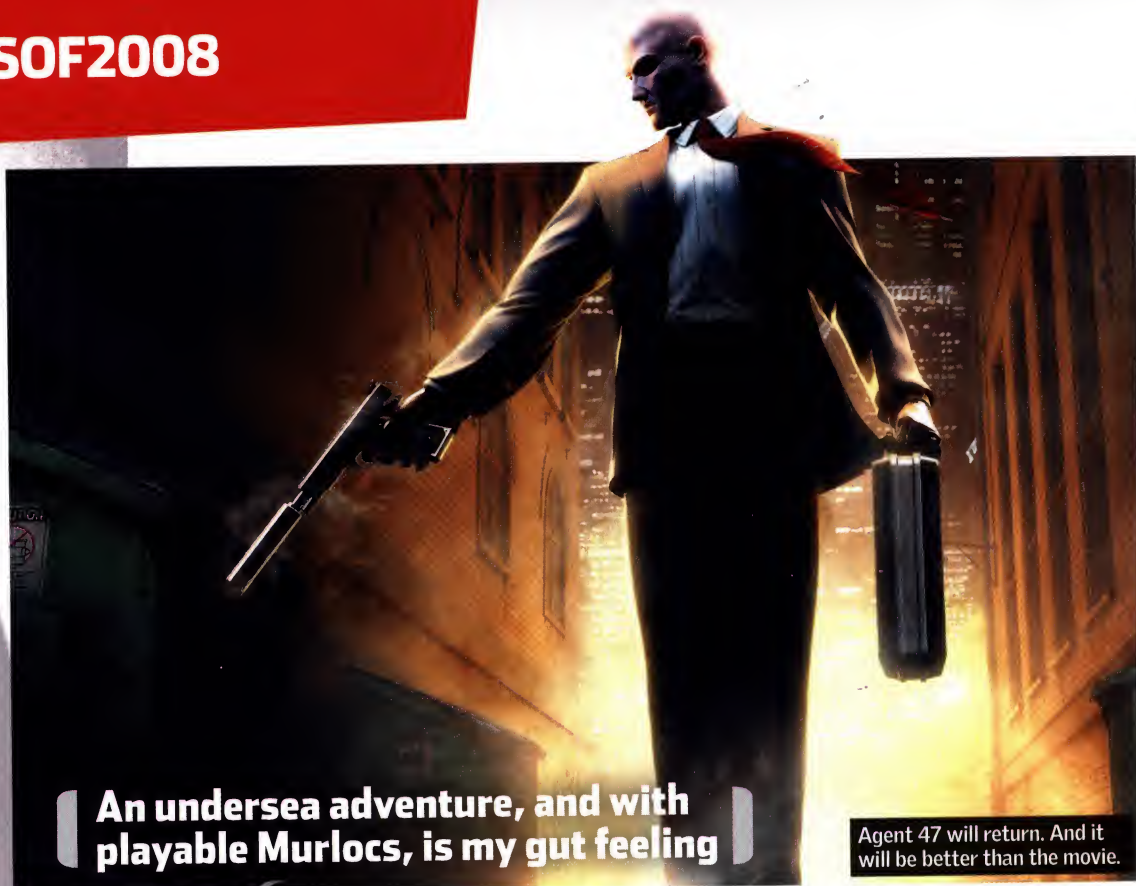
Mystic Will reckons there could be two *X-COM* titles waiting in the wings – one old school, the other not – but both astounding prospects.



CRYTEK CALLOUT

I get the feeling that *Crysis*' sudden ending was the result of a rather truncated development – with word being bandied around





An undersea adventure, and with playable Murlocs, is my gut feeling

Agent 47 will return. And it will be better than the movie.

The new *Battlefield* will be called *Oh No! More Battlefield!*



that it's now to be the first part of a trilogy. What next then? One aspect of *Far Cry* not replicated by *Crysis* was combat between human and trigen/alien AI – and all-out war between Koreans and aliens would certainly be the starting point for the next episode. Expect more ice combat too, and presumably the arrival of an alien mothership at the close of the second game to fit in with what we've been told of the storyline.

What's more, we can probably expect the unveiling of Crytek's secret project at some point this year (something of which Mystic Will does know a little, but won't let on just yet as he doesn't want to upset the friendly German man who confided in him).



HITMAN: NEW

Alongside an all-singing and all-dancing iteration of *Tomb Raider*, finally designed without the limitations of

old-gen consoles in mind, the proclamation

of another outing for the barcoded baldie is inevitable (despite his Hollywood flop). Expect revamped gunplay, a more physical nature to environmental deathtraps and an even more refined sense of crowdplay.



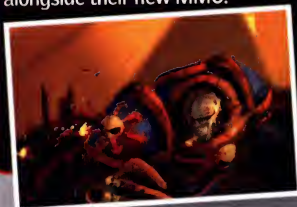
BLIZZ BIZ

These are busy times for the Blizzard boys – what with *Lich King* and *StarCraft II* well on the way to the production conveyor belt. But alongside some cool stuff on the *Warcraft* movie, you can perhaps expect details on yet another expansion pack before the end of the year – if they're keeping in line with their annual release schedule. Which, in fairness, they're probably not. If it does happen though, an undersea adventure, deep inside that big swirling whirlpool in the middle of the map, and with playable Murlocs, is my gut feeling Oh, and the *Diablo III* announcement cannot be far away either, perhaps even at BlizzCon. It won't stray far from the expected model –

Other secrets of the future that Mystic Will's cards betray...

Noon of War

Warhammer 40k: Dawn of War is due a follow-up, and Relic must have another RTS in the works alongside their new MMO.

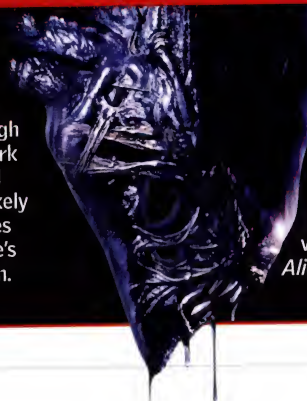


Look who's Tolkien too

LOTR Online expansions are incoming, and presumably set to visit the less well-known land of Rhovanion and the more famed Rohan. Horse mounts a-go-go in the latter. It'll end up near some Volcano probably.

Spector Calls

Further details on Spector/John Woo collaboration *Ninja Gold* will drip through next year, while work on a Disney-themed adventure seems likely seeing as, a) he loves that stuff, and b) he's now owned by them.



Aliens all around

Obsidian's *Alien RPG* and Gearbox's *Aliens* shooter are both due for official unveilings in 2008. Anticipation for both games could be described as fevered. The shooter will, mostly, be close to the *Aliens* movie model. Mostly.

Now *StarCraft*. Soon *Diablo*?

GLaDOS: Still alive?

PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



In Victorian times
they'd be in cages.

H E R O E S

no first-person hi-jinks here – but I suspect it'll be plentiful in gore, and a million miles away from *WOW*'s cartoon visuals.

7 PRESUMED STILL ALIVE

As far as Valve go, a *Portal* follow-up is sure to be announced this year. As,

indeed will further *Team Fortress 2* maps – further support for which is suggested by the fact that many of its promotional character class introduction videos remain unreleased. In fact, a sensible (and Valve-like) thing to do would be to package this material with the release of *Left 4 Dead* – adding a little *Orange Box* all-star sparkle and offsetting the inevitable risks of launching new intellectual property.

8 TELL YOUR FRIENDS

This is a long shot, but Monolith are a big enough

concern to be working on more than *Condemned 2* and *Project Origin* right now. Seeing as they're now owned by Warner Bros, who'll inevitably want more from the new *Batman* film than *LEGO Batman*, I'd take a punt on them developing a decent console/PC rendition of *The Dark Knight*. A long shot, certainly, but entirely possible.

9 BATTLEFIELD BEYOND

Despite my lingering hopes for a *Battlefield 1942 II*, *Battlefield 3* seems to be very much set in the modern day – if leaks from the EA mothership prove to be correct. So ya boo sucks to that, but "Hello Dolly" to in-game replays, customisable characters, a further emphasis on unlockables and 40-on-40 Middle-Eastern action. I can't say that much imagination has gone into that blueprint though, and there simply must be some developers at DICE itching to return to the fray in spitfires. Still, with another

team concentrating on free-running action thriller *Mirror's Edge*, we won't be able to complain. Unless it's console-exclusive.

10 TV TIE-INS

We'll certainly find out a lot more on the *Stargate*, *Firefly* and *Star Trek* MMOs this year – the latter of which will

almost certainly be timed to coincide with increasing hype over the new movie.

Heroes should be getting a gaming crossover too, in which you'll undoubtedly play a variant on Sylar or Peter Petrelli – sucking up new abilities as you go along. When you meet that nice cheerleader we'll finally have a decent excuse for regenerating health in a game, while an encounter with Hiro would conjure up a variant on bullet-time. Exciting, non?



A *Dark Knight* game is a given, but will Monolith get a look-in?

You'll play a variant on Peter Petrelli, sucking up new abilities as you go...

Age of Empires IV

The futuro-scape *Age of Empires* hinted at some time back should surface from its electro-laser pool this year. Expect space colonies and hovertanks.



More C&C

Sure, we've got the devastatingly exciting *Tiberium* on the cards. But there are other universes up for the C&C3 treatment. Come on EA! We know you want to.

Wakey Wakey

Alan Wake – missing presumed delayed. I'd wager it'll still get a PC release, but only after it's one of the big Microsoft 360 releases for Xmas 2008. The console will need a killer title, and I doubt *Gears of War 2* will be here by then.

Duke Nukem Forever

Out this year. For real.





StarCraft II

"Zerg Rush, kekeke" mutters *Ed Zitron* to himself. Worrying fellow commuters

WEBSITE: www.starcraft2.com ETA: TBA

THIS SEQUEL COULD uproot its progenitor as the Korean national sport. But it's a tightrope walk between pleasing insane Olympian RTS maniacs, and people who just like ordering bunches of aliens to blow each other up.

The story picks up four years after the events of *StarCraft: Brood War*, and all your favourites have had wacky adventures inbetween the times – so expect a *Heroes*-esque beginning, with a quick "where are they now" catch-up. Although presumably the Zerg have been using their insectoid rush capabilities for foul means, rather than taking up a job forbidding more than two school children to enter their local Londis at any given time.

In terms of new stuff, Blizzard have announced several new units and abilities; including the Protoss Mothership, pulled from the furthest reaches of the galaxy with the ability to freeze time. Other interesting additions are the Terran Viking, an amazing transforming tank that can become a jet to escape or enter battles in a pinch.

This versatility is to give Terrans some useful anti-air support, and extra air dominance, possibly replacing the Wraith and Goliaths – two for the price of one.

Inevitably, there's also going to be great support for the modding community, who will be able to take advantage of a nifty map editor – and there's even the ability to add levelling to particular creatures, which is good news for fans of the *Defence of the Ancients* mod for *Warcraft III*.

There's a great deal of spit and polish going into what has naturally become a rather decrepit-looking UI, adding in voicechat and a multitude of slinky tweaks. More interesting developments come in *StarCraft II*'s single-player onslaught, adding in character-to-character conversation trees within an almost point-and-click inspired briefing room, resplendent with side-plots that you can get involved in as much or as little as you want.

The campaigns also let you earn money, changing how you buy units by making you buy upgrades and additions



Never check out what a nuke is targeting.



Big robots – perfect for room clearing.



People with glass sculptures shouldn't fire rockets.

to your arsenal using mission rewards out of the top-down area. Intriguing to say the least.

Blizzard is dedicated to maintaining the tightness of the original game, avoiding the glitzy explosive action-film feel of *World in Conflict* and going for that original vibe of gigantic battles

with small-scale weaponry. It's all about balance – between the three factions, and between making a game that is fun for both the powergamer superheroes and normal people who don't bleed Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.

The first hands-on shouldn't be far off, and we'll be there when it happens

C&C3: Kane's Wrath

I am Kane's raging bile duct

WEBSITE: www.commandandconquer.com ETA: Spring

RTS EXPANSIONS ARE usually nothing to get a-flutter about, but *Kane's Wrath* is shaping up to be interesting, with a new campaign mode and a selection of splinter groups that expand the selectable factions to nine.

The global conquest mode sports *Total War*-style continent-conquering with persistent armies, an open-ended mission structure, and sub-factions including new and modified units with pros and cons based on what faction you're playing as. These include the GDI's heavy-weaponry-loving Steel Talons and high-tech ZOCOMs, The

Marked of Kane (Nod's elite), The special forces-type Black Hand, and the Scrin's Stalker 17 and Reaver 43 splinter-groups. And each faction gets a new epic unit. We're shaving our heads in anticipation.



Attack of the energy eggs.

Warhammer 40,000: Soulstorm

Coming to a teacup near you...

WEBSITE: www.dawnofwargame.com/uk ETA: March

PUBLIC OPINION SAYS that *Dawn of War* is more solid than a brick in Lisa Maffia's handbag, so it's pleasing to see this stand-alone expansion of this fantastic RTS. A warp storm surrounds a planet, and in the process intrigues the factions towards it, trapping them like the rabbits in our air vents.

There are two new factions, the Dark Eldar and the Sisters of Battle, both of which run on independent new resources, and a new *Empire Earth III*-esque map-

mission system that gives you special bonuses for occupying certain terrains. This add-on is shaping up to be impressive.



Hard to tell armies apart when they're gore splattered.

Codename: Panzers – Cold War

Bring on the Commies...

WEBSITE: www.electronicarts.co.uk ETA: Early 2008

EVEN HEARING THE word "Panzer" usually sends us catatonic, but Stormregion's stand-alone sequel to *Codename: Panzers* could wake us up with another, hopefully better, alternative history RTS. When a plane carrying aid during the Berlin Blockade smashes into a Russian jet, it all goes to hell and war kicks off.

Cold War boasts a built-in physics engine that determines how a building would crumble, so that each explosion has a

realistic effect. While all the furious German attention to detail is present and correct. Tank lovers should be thrilled with this one.



Good old napalm.

PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



Spore

A tentative sip of primordial soup

WEBSITE: www.spore.com ETA: TBA

SPORE WAS A a fantastic accomplishment of computerised microcosms. The brainchild of Will Wright, has the potential to be an amalgam of *The Sims*, *Sim Earth*, *Sim Ant*, and *Sim Life*. You know the score already: you raise your creatures from the very beginnings of amoebic life to eventually colonise other planets with your vicious, or tree-hugging, race of thrillseekers.

This life simulator is of different genres throughout the Cellular, Creature, Tribal, Civilisation and Space phases, with the eventual goals being surviving over all other forms of life. Beware though: it's also a game kitted in kid gloves with a take on the perils of nature that's more *Madagascar* than *Wildlife on One*. Then again, the stuff Wright is doing with inserting your creations into the single-player games of others is nothing short of revolutionary.

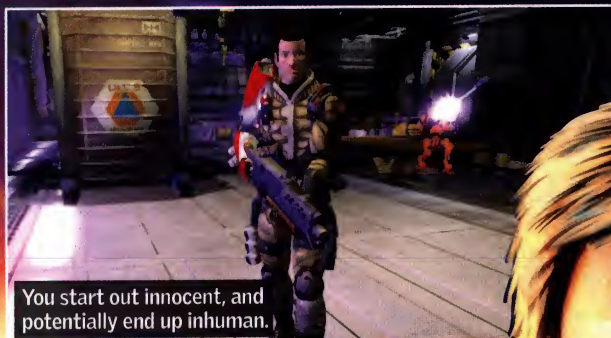
Taking the ethos of earlier *Sim* games and blending them directly into the glossy fun factory of *The Sims* – the only question is whether it'll be obscenely successful, or just very successful.



Spore won't be popular with Creationists.



Considering how long we've waited, this game better be good.



You start out innocent, and potentially end up inhuman.

Space Siege is all about stamping out the traditional RPG restrictions

Space Siege

Chris Taylor, the best excited American man ever, shouts excitedly at Andy Robinson

WEBSITE: www.spacesiege.com ETA: Q1

DESPITE ITS NAME share, Gas Powered Games' *Space Siege* is making big departures from its dungeon-dwelling predecessor. "In *Space Siege*," says ever-enthusiastic honcho Chris Taylor, "We're not adhering to any old-school system. We're not just carrying features along like baggage, we're dumping it if it doesn't make sense."

And he's not joking either: "We've dropped multi-character parties, we've dropped the inventory system, we're even dropping experience for God's sake!" *Space Siege*, says Taylor, is all about stamping out the traditional RPG restrictions and bringing choices over to the player. "In the old design you'd find a

gun and you couldn't use it because you need more experience. That's just dumb: if you find a cool gun, you want to use it.

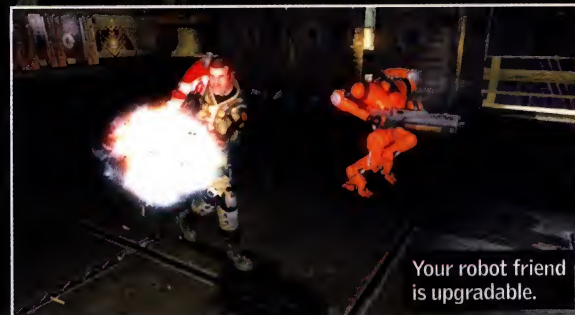
"The closest we get to that is 'It's too heavy, you can't wield it because you don't have a cybernetic arm,'" and there's where the most conscience-testing component of all comes in; the ability to strip your character's limbs and replace them with hulking machines, swapping humanity for strength.

The plot isn't a million miles away from *Red Dwarf* – a goliath ship ripe for the exploration, a robot companion and humanity on the brink of extinction – but Taylor is promising a moral complexity that belies the somewhat bright and bold visuals.

"The first time you play through you're probably going to say 'Give me the cybernetics!' and you're going to be a hulking cybernetic monster," says Taylor. "But your ending's going to reflect that – you'll walk into a room and people will scream and be like 'That's the hero?!'"

It'll be a tough choice on players, reckons Taylor, but he's not sure if games are ready to make us cry.

"Hollywood has a cry button. They can go, 'I think we're going to make them cry now – buzz!' Do you think videogames can make people cry with the press of a button? I think it's going to take us a lot longer."



Your robot friend is upgradable.



"Do you have a Facebook?"



We're hoping aliens get bigger.



Pour boiling water on them. Usually does the trick.

Rise of the Argonauts

Taking off fleece so that you feel the benefit

WEBSITE: www.codemasters.com ETA: Q2

ACTION RPGS HAVE been plundering legends for years, from the Norse lore used to create barbarians of every *EverQuest* offshoot in existence to the ranger class, ripped off from the Greek god Artemis.

Rise of the Argonauts is no exception, willingly returning to the original super friends and retelling the story, though with a little artistic reinterpretation of

Jason's adventures. You can expect to be able to take control of Jason himself, along with his good buddy Hercules and the rest of Team Argos, gallivanting with the gods.

Expect cinematic, fast-paced combat, a pimp-able ship in the form of the legendary Argos and an array of fantastical islands to explore in true *KOTOR* fashion.



Well, we've got to worm mother somehow...



Full-on limb removal is a much-touted feature.

Dragon Age

Dragons? Coool! There's a thing...

WEBSITE: dragonage.bioware.com ETA: TBA

CURRENTLY BACK IN hibernation due to the dual affect of the EA takeover of BioWare and the release of *Mass Effect* (itself hugely likely to get a PC release this year) *Dragon Age* has every chance of picking up the old-school RPG baton and running with it all the way past the slightly more casually-minded *Fallout 3*.

Building fantasy lore afresh, BioWare's kingdom of Ferelden does the party-based RPG dance slickly, cinematically and bloodily. Having you play through varied and well-scripted origin stories for your chosen character, rather than have you groggily wake up in bed with an inkling you should talk to a magic princess, the idea is to properly

inject your character with the narrative gumption usually found in harder-edged fantasy novels.

Quite frankly, it can't arrive quickly enough for us.



"Pass the fire extinguisher please."

Sacred 2 - Fallen Angel

Blood spilt on hallowed ground...

WEBSITE: www.sacred2.com ETA: Q1

Saucy Diablo Clone *Sacred 2* shocked us all by being somewhat good. *Sacred 2 - Fallen Angel* looks like it's following the same track, but upping the ante scale-wise to make the fantasy world of angels and elves gigantic enough to take hours to cross on foot. It's looking to take the big jump from the on-rails Act system of the *Diablos* to a genuine 'world' that you travel through, like in your average MMO.

There's also an intuitive MMO-like system of customisation, that takes its cues from *WoW*'s talent system - levelling up spells and abilities is done on the basis of additions to objects, rather than linear "this fireball now hits harder, and your sword is made of angry bees" of days gone by.

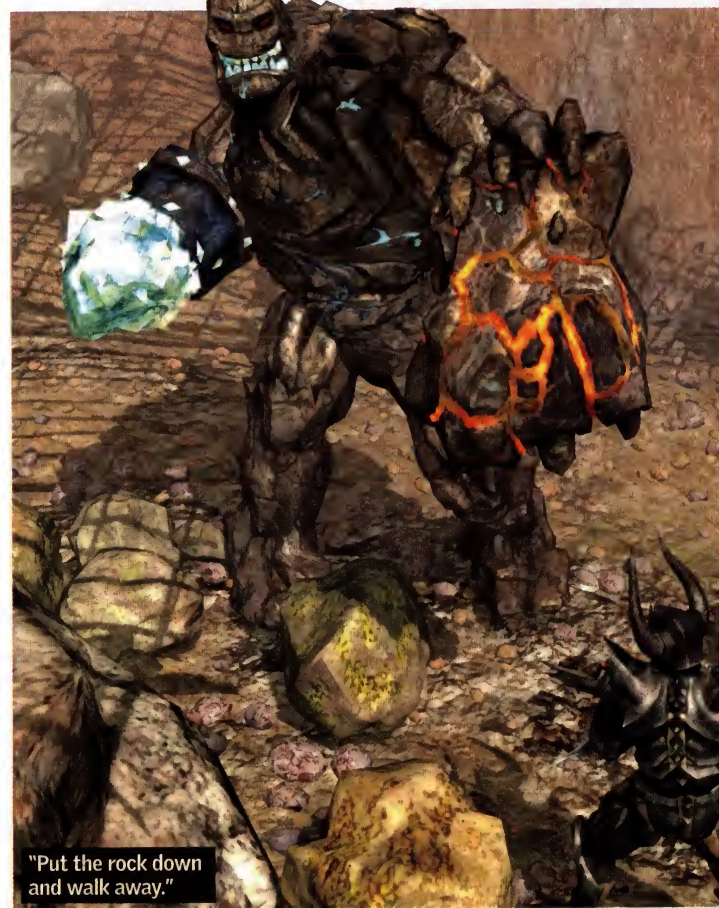
Sacred 2 - Fallen Angel seems to be looking quieten the crowds screaming "we must have *Diablo 3*!" with its siren song of fantasy RPG hack 'n slash action.



Not a bloody Ewok in sight.



I like my women like my coffee - 7ft tall.



"Put the rock down and walk away."



Empire: Total War

What *Ed Zitron* lacks in sea legs he makes up for in scurvy

WEBSITE: www.totalwar.com ETA: Q3

THE AMERICAS COMPONENT of *Medieval II: Total War* was good, but will be nothing when compared to the conquest, exploration and ruthless expansion pioneered in *Empire: Total War*.

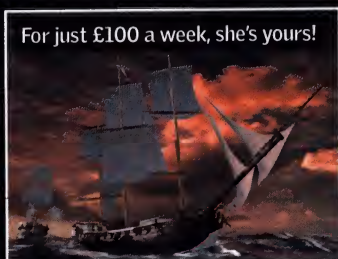
Putting you in command of the British, the French or one of 50 or so other factions, the game will immerse you in slick naval combat, as you fight battles in distant lands, defend your colonies and tighten your grip on the New World.

War at sea takes the combat from *Shogun* and *Medieval* and adds maritime charm. Rather than the classic element of using terrain to your advantage, you'll have to pay attention to the direction of the wind and use it to influence your speed, your attacks, and your naval manoeuvres. Your water-borne units also have to aim carefully to deal the most damage, with the ability to aim your guns at the sails, slowing a ship to a halt, or peppering bigger ships while sitting in their blind spots.

The engine too has been overhauled, allowing for slicker, more detailed graphics, from the macro level of the terrain to the micro level of the troops. Not only that, but we can expect a full-blown rethink of the game's AI, with

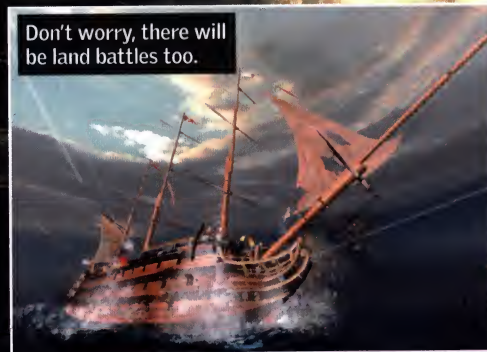


So authentic you'll puke.



For just £100 a week, she's yours!

Don't worry, there will be land battles too.



troops now reacting to your diplomatic relations, and even the weather. Rain will make your troops sluggish and dampen your gunpowder, while storms will make the sea a treacherous mistress. Generals will scream orders, ragdoll corpses will be thrown by cannon shot and bagpipes on the battlefield will give a mark of authenticity.

Coupled with these changes to the real-time action, the strategic sections have been streamlined, adding nation-based micromanagement (not requiring you to single out individual regions and change their taxes, for example). The entire game has been smoothed, buffed and shined up for the prime time, and it's looking like another *Total War* triumph.

WELCOME TO THE REAL DOT COM BOOM



Peace of mind means knowing that having fun can be rewarding, too. So welcome to Kwari, an online combat arena where killing will make you rich. Every time you're hit you lose cash, but every hit you inflict on another combatant equals real money in the bank. Can you afford not to play?

Playtime is over. Kwari is here.

Download for free.



Kwari and the Kwari logo are trademarks of Kwari Limited.
© Kwari Limited, 2007.

www.kwari.com



This time around it's all about the race rather than any off-track shenanigans

Race Driver: GRID

Ed Zitron falls back to 19th place through a gearbox fault, then moves to Switzerland in frustration

WEBSITE: www.codemasters.co.uk ETA: TBA

S SHEDDING THE TOCA name, *Race Driver: GRID* looks to redefine a genre already somewhat redefined by Codemasters' excellent *Colin McRae: DiRT*. "The first big change is that this isn't a TOCA game. We don't feel the TOCA prefix is relevant any more to the content we're including and the racing experience we're aiming to deliver," explains Ralph Fulton, Codies' chief games designer – alluding to how Supertruck racing and the like has trouble fitting under the 'touring car' moniker.

"GRID is about a broader, more global view of motorsport: it's as much about drifting on Yokohama docks and racing the streets of Detroit as it is about touring cars at Donington Park."

Using the Neon engine seen in *DiRT*, Codemasters are looking to put the



It's a Lamborghini for me, Nissan Micra for her.

essential ethos of racing back into the game, taking the focus back to the contest itself, rather than the culture, the tuning and the customisation that previous TOCAs have moved towards.

This time around it's all about damage, rivalries, crashes and the race itself, rather than any off-track shenanigans.

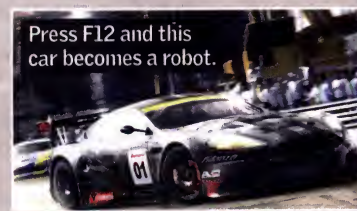
The changes and additions are supported by a comprehensive new damage system, rebuilt from the Neon engine to be as realistic as possible.

"We've gone back to the drawing board with it. *DiRT* had the best car damage in the genre when it came out, but we wanted to ensure that we could still make that claim when *GRID* is released," says Fulton. "To that end, we've rebuilt it from the ground up to maximise the ways we can dent, bend, tear and smash a race car to pieces, and the results are pretty amazing. We've also improved our car rendering to allow up to 20 cars on track, which is essential for the kinds of motorsport we're including."

GRID is looking to bring home the feel of worldwide motor-racing, both



Skateboarding mode is scary.



Press F12 and this car becomes a robot.

for newbies and driving fanatics of the world: "For those who want their driving experience to be more challenging there'll still be the option to switch off driving aids, but our goal is that everybody who plays the game can enjoy driving these incredible racing cars."

There'll be the usual showroom full of flash cars from the likes of Porsche and Ferrari, and a revised career mode allowing you to travel the world to win the hearts and minds of nations. *GRID* will be parking its way into our hearts sometime in the later part of this year, and we'll honk until you listen up.



Drive through such lovely vistas as Doncaster, Stechford and Staines.

MAKE A KILLING ONLINE



Peace of mind means knowing that having fun can be rewarding, too. So welcome to Kwari, an online combat arena where killing will make you rich. Every time you're hit you lose cash, but every hit you inflict on another combatant equals real money in the bank. Can you afford not to play?

Playtime is over. Kwari is here.

Download for free.



Kwari and the Kwari logo are trademarks of Kwari Limited.
© Kwari Limited, 2007.

www.kwari.com



In the foreground a brahmin. In the background the outer shell of Megaton.



Fallout 3

Bethesda drop the hype-bomb on an unsuspecting PC ZONE team

WEBSITE: fallout.bethsoft.com ETA: Q3

SEEING AS BETHESDA are still lugging around the same presentation of *Fallout 3* as last time we saw it, we decided to conduct a scientific experiment. We put three *Fallout 3* virgins in front of it and placed salivation-detection devices beneath their tongues. These failed to work, so we asked them to write something instead.

The presentation also shed new light on a few things. Previous assumptions that the lead character's mother would play a part (as well as the Liam Neeson errant father) were probably wrong, while we also got a stronger feeling that the Vault Overseer's daughter will play a strong role in the drama. Love interest? Who knows...

Anyway, as well as one of our number irritating Bethesda's spokesperson beyond measure with demands to know whether or not he could become a sheriff (Zitron seems to have a thing about authority) the following recordings were scientifically measured and neatly written into our copybooks...

Chockablock still finds work.



And he hasn't even negotiated the 4x4s outside the school gates yet...



PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



CASE STUDY #1:

Morrowind obsessive

Steve Hogarty



"I find myself lying awake at night worrying about the dwindling sizes of Bethesda's game worlds. *Morrowind* was huge, *Oblivion* was smaller, and *Fallout 3*'s post-nuclear world is going to be smaller again. At least that's how it looks on paper. When you actually see it being played it doesn't seem that tiny at all. So I don't know what I'm worried about, especially since Bethesda have promised that every square inch of the world will be more detailed and interesting than the last.

"Then again, they've also said the main quest will be done in 20 hours and the rest in around 40, which is quite frankly a piece of piss. As a *Morrowind* fan, I want to spend hundreds upon hundred of hours collecting obscure bits of armour and I don't think *Fallout 3* is going to let me do that.

"The VATS combat system looks really cool though."

Bless you.



Megaton: Cheap housing, occasional cholera.

CASE STUDY #2:

Oblivion fanboy

Ed Zitron



"As a die-hard fan of dystopian anything, the very idea of *Fallout 3* is one that sets my heart on fire. Thus when the lights dropped, the title screen passed, and the dulcet tones of Ron 'twinkle-toes' Perlman deplored humanity's tendency towards war, it was all I could not to drop a deuce right there. From the get-go there's a focus on story - on telling a really dramatic tale of a world torn apart by nuclear war, rather than you exploring every nook and cranny just because you can.

"While *Oblivion* left you with a sense of wonderment, somewhat devoid of purpose, *Fallout 3* kicks in with the idea that your father has gone missing - he's left the Vault, your only home - and you must follow. It seems Bethesda are intent on giving you living, breathing, interesting characters that you care about and react to - like Mr Burke, the shadowy bastard who wants Megaton to be renamed Craterville.

"Combat seems a lot more tactical, and the entire package seems tighter and more focused than any of the RPGs Bethesda have put out before. I await with both bated breath and gritted teeth to break *Fallout 3* open like a radioactive piñata."

CASE STUDY #3:

The one who usually writes about bums

Jon 'Log' Blyth



"My prior experience with *Fallout* is limited. I know for someone who likes RPGs this is near unforgivable, but I bet there are a couple of games out there you haven't played too. However, if there's one thing that bugged me about Bethesda's *Elder Scrolls* games, it's the combat. From the alienating experience of getting swiftly butchered by the first troglodytes I tripped over in *Morrowind*, to the transparent illusion of skill in *Oblivion*, I was never once convinced.

"But *Fallout*'s dramatic 'zoom, pause and plan' way of crossing live-action with turn-based combat seems to do the perfect trick of combining strategy and gunplay in a way that doesn't feel deceptive.

"That, combined with the dark humour and stats of the series, will almost certainly tickle me until I squirm to the floor and admit I love it. Having said that, the morality tree of good-neutral-evil does seem a little dry. Like *BioShock*'s 'kill or harvest', with an additional option to 'fold your arms and pointedly ignore'. Still, *BioShock* wasn't shit, was it?"

There's a focus on story - on telling a really dramatic tale of a world torn apart by nuclear war



THE VERDICT!

In all probability a game that is not only not shit, but also blisteringly good. The game may not please every corner of the internet, but the blueprint of *Fallout 3* could well flesh out into a fantastic RPG.



Lost: The Video Game

Will Porter taps the same material into a computer day-in day-out for no discernible reason, brother

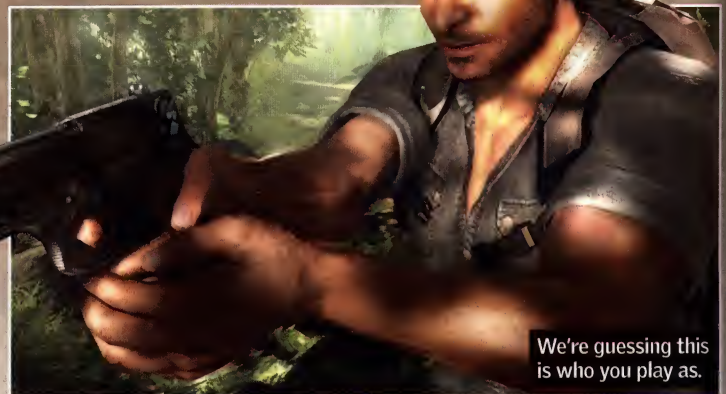
WEBSITE: Lostgame.us.ubi.com ETA: Feb

LOST FREQUENTLY MAKES a joke of the fact that of its cluster of crash survivors, only a certain number of extremely interesting characters (and Charlie) ever get to do exciting stuff on camera. And so it's entirely feasible that J.J. Abrams can conjure up Elliot – the character you'll play as the game runs its seven 'episodes' parallel to the *Lost* storyline. Conveniently, he conforms to two of the most overused character devices in gaming: he's an amnesiac (ding!) and a photojournalist (ding! ding!), who may well be required to take photos of the various beasts and mysteries on the island.

"J.J. Abrams is involved in the making of the game, as are all the executive producers," explains Gadi Pollack, the game's producer, as assurance that this is a game with princely roots, presumably under the misapprehension that I never got round to playing the *Alias* tie-in. "We meet and talk to them on a regular basis to update them on our progress and receive their feedback."

Suspend your inbred suspicion of the TV/cinema cash-in for a moment though, as for *Lost* fans this could be awesome. The tale, for example, tells itself with the traditional *Lost* flashbacks, shedding light on your own character's pre-marooned life in a fashion not a million miles away from Ubisoft's earlier misunderstood classic *XIII* (I'm still standing by that one, kids). Then factor in the menacing environment of the island itself, the prospect of reliving so many of the show's key moments (tapping in the fateful numbers in the hatch, incarceration by the others in *The Prisoner*-esque conditions) and polar bears – and you've got a geek-pleasing treat at the least.

"We've created a linear story progression, but each map is open to make sure fans can explore all the great easter eggs," explains Pollack. "Our main



We're guessing this is who you play as.

goal is to allow the fans to explore any location on the island at their own pace. But this is *Lost*, so you never know what is lurking in those jungles."

Apart from, a cynic might add, the inevitable presence of hatches, French women, smoke monsters, Dharma Initiative stations, '60s-style CCTV systems and quests for dynamite in jungle-bound tall ships that is. And that horrid Ben character with the watery evil eyes. Ooh, how I hate him...



"Oh no, I am... LOST."

Postal III

The dude abides. And urinates. And beheads...

WEBSITE: www.gopostal.com ETA: Q3

THE FIRST RULE for games journalists when it comes to interviewing notorious developers is not to do your research on Wikipedia. Which is why we asked *Postal III*'s developers about 'murderer lifestyles'.

"That's bullshit!" cries outraged Running With Scissors CEO Vince Desi. A slightly less outraged lead designer Steve Wik picks up the baton: "There are no 'murder lifestyles' in *Postal III*. What we do have are three paths: The Good, The Bad and The Insane. The idea being that our game is based on the concept of free will. Lethal

force is always just an option that the player can choose to employ. Depending upon how you act and who you attack or befriend, there are different scenarios and benefits that can occur."

So you can play either a cop on the force of good, a pureblood mentalist, or a non-killing puritan. Even if you'll experimentally drop your trousers and urinate on people at some point in any situation, simply because you can.

Newly third-personised, powered by Source, and forever an unexpected vendor of free-form gameplay – the *Postal* series may not be big or clever, but is undeniably always interesting. As, indeed, is any game that features a hand-held badger that acts as a chainsaw. Or any game that so deftly treads around (okay, stomps on wearing metal-soled motorcycle boots) issues like Islamic fundamentalism or immigration.

"It just wouldn't be *Postal* without the absurd caricatures!" underlines Wik. "Just remember that it is not our intention to

Postal takes the piss again.



single out particular groups for ridicule – we try to show that everybody sucks. If your particular group isn't represented, rest assured that we'll get around to everyone eventually, just be patient. Your turn to be offended will come."

Oh lol, a badger. Well done.



Mafia II

Playa Fly need not apply...

WEBSITE: www.2kgames.com/mafia2 ETA: TBA

THE SEQUEL TO the game that caused an industry-wide raid upon puns from *Goodfellas* and *The Godfather* returns this year for a fresh stab at the gangster epic.

Drawing on the aforementioned films for some visual inspiration, 2K Games' *Mafia II* looks more polished than the original, taking the game into the '40s and buffing the edges, giving it a fantastic cinematic flair.

This isn't a direct continuation, but will take the spirit of the original's plot into a new storyline.

From what we've seen, the whole package looks a lot slicker, with a hunk of Coppola-style love on top to give it that authentic feel.



Dead men don't wear plaid.

Assassin's Creed

Go on, take a stab

WEBSITE: www.assassinscreed.com ETA: February

EVERYBODY LOVES TO murder with finesse, and in Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed* you're given the chance to do so en masse, in a *Dexter*-like fashion, but with the acrobatic abilities of Batman.

A play of the console iteration reveals a conspiracy-filled plot, in which you travel through an ancestor's memories to solve a mystery for the evil Abstergo Corporation. There's a great deal of assassinating action to be had, with nine big bad guys to take down and a fair few side quests involved in the process.

Story-wise, it's an interesting take on the classic conspiracy of an old organisation living on in the future, but reinforced by the fact that you see their past exploits.





Locked out of the church again...

Amazingly, little is known about the particulars of the PC version, most importantly if the controls will be usable by control pad-jockeys only. But it's definitely on the way, and it does look pretty.



Oh no, cataracts!

Now THAT'S
a right hook.

EA are trying to make a world
that will scare the bejesus out of
you, in a classical cinematic way

Dead Space

After staring at an empty document for 10 minutes,
Ed Zitron realises that's the name of the game

WEBSITE: www.ea.com/deadspace ETA: TBA

THE REASONS WHY we're not going anywhere in space are pretty obvious. If you look back at our history of films and games, such as *Alien*, *Ghosts of Mars* and *System Shock 2*, it's clear what's going to happen; if we leave Earth's atmosphere, we are all screwed.

Dead Space continues this scaremongering with a story set around a private mining ship, the *Ishimura*, that suddenly stops phoning home. In walks general nerdy bloke Isaac Clarke, who finds out that it's all gone to buggery, with some kind of mutation plaguing the ship and making it all go a bit *Doom*.

Trapped on his own with nowt but a torch and a pack of matches, Isaac has to adapt to his situation by using mining tools to chop up miscreant mutants, with a big emphasis on dismemberment. If it's a limb, it can be lopped off, and EA intend to make them delightfully gruesome. The over-the-shoulder camera and tight, dark visuals make for a deliberately cold, uninviting and claustrophobic atmosphere – similar to *System Shock 2*'s eerie setting of a broken future.

A great deal of the influence for the game obviously comes from late '80s to '90s horror films, from the hidden evil of *Alien*, to the impending doom of *Event Horizon*, and from other games like *Resident Evil*. EA are trying to make a world that will scare the bejesus out of you, but in a classical cinematic way rather than the *F.E.A.R.*-style gross-out "what the hell is going on" fashion. The mutated, sickening quasi-people smack of John Carpenter's *The Thing*, dripping with blood, gore, and only lack one key head-on-spider legs to transfer directly.

Dead Space has got all the classic elements: a mysterious, unexpected disease, horrible little creatures, and a



situation that screams "adapt or die." Hopefully the writing will match the obvious artistic inspiration, and the gore will be in the right place..

Dead Space is shaping up like a nostalgic technophobic epic that will delve back into humanity's fear of progress, and should be a real horror alternative for the gamer set upon crapping his pants. It's going to be a welcome alternative to the cinematic overkill horrorfests of *Saw* and *Hostel*, although hopefully it won't be too console-centric. We'll have a major *Dead Space* exclusive next month.

Alone in the Dark

Just one voice, singing all alone

WEBSITE: www.centraldark.com ETA: Q2

CARNBY'S, INCREASINGLY PROLONGED, return to being scared by animals jumping through windows is almost upon us. But Nour Polloni, the game's producer over at Eden, goes to great pains to avoid the usual survival horror tag. "We're not making a horror game," he implores, while jabbing his finger forcefully. "Yes there's scary elements, yes there's monsters, yes it's an epic fight to survive, but our cues come from outside the genre. The film that influenced us more than any other is *Die Hard* – not only is it an action classic full of great big explosive set pieces, but it's also the quintessential tale of one man's survival against impossible odds."

So there you are – fighting, driving, being hunted and setting fire to things and people in an increasingly deranged representation of New York's Central Park. Away from the scary monsters, the simple way in which fire ravages your surrounding is astounding when seen in motion. You can even, say,

smash a hole in a car's petrol tank, drive it forward, leap out and return to the start of the leaked petrol trail before setting light to it and watching the vehicle go up in flames.

"Another example of using fire as a tool would be a situation where the path is too dark to take safely and you've got no batteries left for your flashlight," explains Nour. "So one way would be to smash a wooden chair, set fire to one of the legs and use it like a makeshift torch."

AITD looks ever more the classic – a return of what was a genuinely groundbreaking brand – and to that end we'll have a more in-depth look at it next issue.



"What is this, some sort of statue?"



"Take that, stupid flames."



One way to cook seafood.

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames

One explosion is never enough

WEBSITE: www.mercs2.com ETA: February

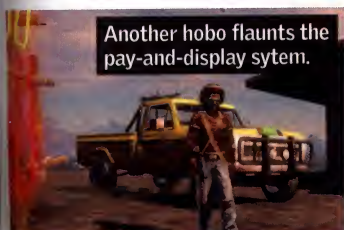
IN *MERCENARIES 2*, don't expect a leap in storytelling or character. The fun is in the fact that everything explodes on a stupidly massive scale.

With your choice of three slightly different mercenaries (biker, girl and heavy) developer Pandemic is creating a sandbox world in Venezuela, where you can complete missions any violent or silly way you like. With access to over 150 vehicles (including tanks, helicopters, trucks and, er, sea-dos), a terrifying arsenal and the opportunity for



Spot Hulk Hogan.

instant drop-in, drop-out co-op multiplayer, *World in Flames* is a third-person action game where you can jettison your brain.



Another hobo flaunts the pay-and-display system.



Look at that car fly.

Splinter Cell: Conviction

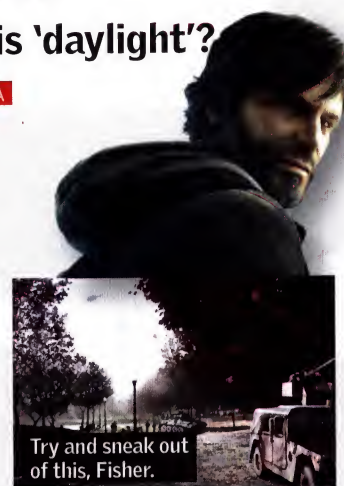
Daylight? What is this 'daylight'?

WEBSITE: www.splintercell.com ETA: TBA

NOTICABLY SNAFFLED INTO an Ubisoft backroom after an unveiling that raised more sad half-smiles than it did intrigued eyebrows, Sam should hopefully make a more striking impact this year.

But with *Assassin's Creed* stylings (hoodie, crowd, lots of running away) mixed with *Bourne* sensibilities (environment as a weapon, weighty thumps and lots of running away), will the exchange of shadowplay for the garb of an urban thriller win us over?

Seeing Fisher stacking up computer monitors and photocopiers in front of a door to block the path of angry guards is great, but you can't help but grimace when he grabs one and renders them unconscious by chucking them into a shelving unit. It's certainly a bold move for the developers, alongside an obvious admission that they don't see traditional stealth as being sexy



Try and sneak out of this, Fisher.

anymore, and with a clever sleight of hand they may well pull it off.

I mean, you can't help but relish the concept of sneaking in and around Washington DC landmarks in the manner of a less-shit *National Treasure*. Sink or swim though, at least the beard is cool.



World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

On geography...

"When people heard the expansion was going to be set in Northrend, they freaked out, saying 'No, I can't go to a continent that's all snow!' Just visually alone, we've made sure that all the zones are not full of ice. For example, the Howling Fjord is completely green, and it's modelled after the Redwood Forest on the Pacific north-west."

"There's another zone called the Borean Tundra that has typical autumn colours, and we're really going out of our way to make sure the zones are visually distinct. Another cool part of Northrend is the big PvP zone. It's about the size of Westfall, and will be all-PvP – in no way, shape or form will we support PvE players in it. It'll be optional, but it'll be completely non-instanced, have multiple objectives, siege weapons, and destructible buildings."



It's not grim up Northrend.

Will Porter stands behind *WOW* lead designer Jeff Kaplan in a queue for sandwiches and turns on his dictaphone...

WEBSITE: www.worldofwarcraft.com ETA: TBA

FROM HIS EARLY days as an *EverQuest* commentator to the lofty heights of lead designer on *World of Warcraft*, Jeff Kaplan's rise to power has been meteoric. In the flesh he's polite, kindly spoken and passionate, often sporting – as most of Blizzard seem to – own-brand shirts with brightly coloured orcs on them. Our leading authority on sexy elves cornered him recently and demanded details of our imminent journey into Northrend – and Jeff's promises were exciting to say the least...

On grand entrances...

"We absolutely need to make the entry to Northrend epic. I mean, we originally had the entry to *Burning Crusade*'s Dark Portal as a bunch of cohorts walking around, and people reacted badly. This really hammered home the fact that we needed to raise expectations on entering the expansions. With the four points of entry (two for each side) we've gone out of our way to make them cool. With the Alliance you go to the Howling Fjord – you come down through the big Fjord walls, and there's big battle going on around you. For the Horde, in Howling Fjord, you enter an area with brand new Forsaken architecture. Traditionally they have wrecked human buildings, but we've built these awesome new Forsaken buildings, with their own distinct style that comes from the Undercity – that kind of Tim Burton feel. They're landing an invasion for fighting the Alliance, and instantly you can see the battle."

"If you go to the other side, to the Borean Tundra, the Alliance comes into a giant Alliance stronghold, with a brand new leader that we're building up – and a massive Alliance steam ship. They're launching an expeditionary force to get to Icecrown and defeat Arthas, but



The Forsaken go for a (Tim) Burton.

the Horde are coming into the Warsong Fortress, ruled by Garrosh, son of Grom Hellscream (from *Warcraft III*) – so instantly there's a major Horde character. Not only that, but the Warsong base is absolutely huge and epic. We've built this giant, epic base specifically for this guy, and the Horde dock in the base when they start. The Horde will have this moment where they are just instantly in awe."

The Warsong base is huge and epic. The Horde will have this moment where they are just instantly in awe

On high levels...

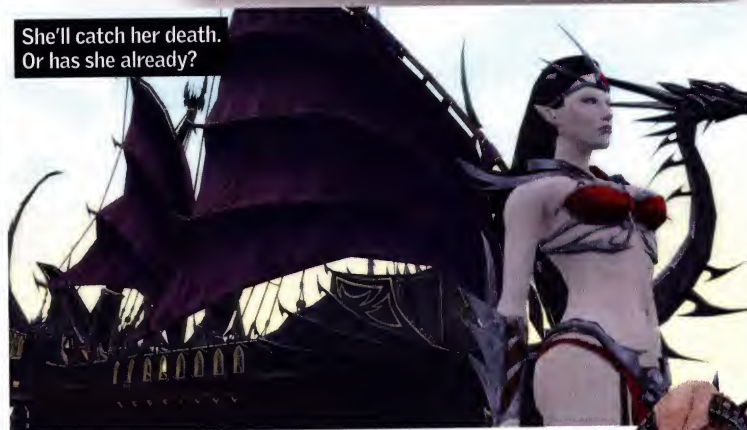
"We feel that we now have an overwhelming majority of players who have played through the content to the end. It's not even about the casual/hardcore thing, it's more about addressing an issue that exists among max-level players. We felt we could deliver on content towards the end of the game, and that players between level 30 and 40 already have so much to do in the game that they haven't run out of content yet."

"These medium-level players are not really hungry for the new features that *Wrath of the Lich King* brings. It's really about satisfying the players who have reached max level, whether they solo or whether they PvP, whether they raid or role-play. If they're at max level they're all saying, 'I want more, what are you guys doing for us?'"

Behold! Nifflevar!



She'll catch her death.
Or has she already?



Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning

Like *Warcraft*, only the orcs burp and fart more

WEBSITE: www.warhammeronline.com ETA: TBA

WARHAMMER IS CHIEF of the contenders for MMO runner-up this year. Catering to both avid PvPers and players who want to go up against NPC content, EA Mythic's strong Realm vs Realm history looks to combine with PvE quests to turn the tides of war, much like Blizzard's battleground quests on a larger scale.

Another defining element is the way in which classes are race-specific. For example, the elves have the Swordmaster, a much more graceful character than the dwarves' Ironbreaker or Hammerer,

requiring more finesse, but with more protection and tank qualities. Like a mucky mirror, the Black Guard of the Chaos are the opposite – brutal, pain-loving death-dealers, a classic shadowknight class.

Even more interesting is the strength of the intellectual property of the *Warhammer* universe, and the scale on which Mythic is intending to wage their Realm vs Realm combat. Full-on city sieges, run by players, could be something incredibly special in the MMO world – if done right. And, let's face it, every self-regarding fantasy fan likes a little of that *Warhammer* swagger.

On the big bad...

"We're giving all players going into the expansion interaction with Arthas. We were too protective of Illidan [the arch villain in *The Burning Crusade*] making sure we didn't waste the opportunity, so now you're interacting with him straight away. You're talking to him, having these moments with him, so you don't have to be a raider to see him. We're also having a Caverns of Time mission – The Culling from *Warcraft III* – so that you can go back and play alongside Arthas when he was shiny and good, when you're burning Stratholme."

The Howling Fjord is a bit singed in parts.



Certainly the best
MMO beards in years.

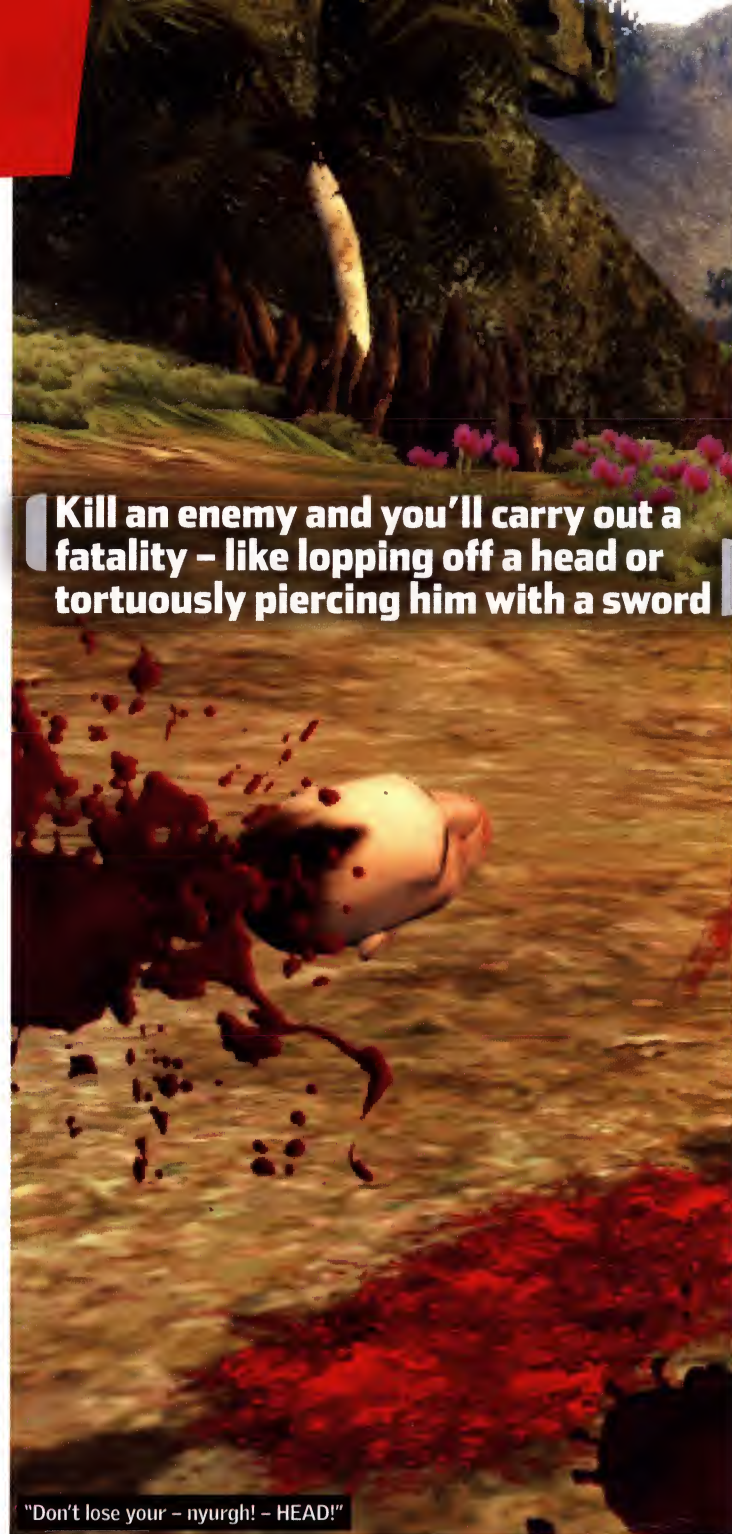


"Have at you, heinous beast."

Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures

Steve Hogarty visits Oslo, sees five barbarians, one belly dancer, and easily the most violent MMO of 2008

WEBSITE: www.ageofconan.com ETA: March 2008



Kill an enemy and you'll carry out a fatality – like lopping off a head or tortuously piercing him with a sword

"Don't lose your – nyurgh! – HEAD!"

SO WHAT HAVE Funcom been doing with *Age of Conan* since PC ZONE unceremoniously infuriated barbarian fans across the globe by calling Conan "an awful stereotype of a fantasy RPG class most people don't choose any more"? Our last hands-on with Funcom's online action-RPG threw up various concerns about the game's combat system, which we criticised back in issue 183 as being "a little clunky", "a little fiddly", "cumbersome" and "ideally suited to players with three hands".

Not long after heaping our worries on the plucky developer (whose previous successes include *Anarchy Online* and *Dreamfall*), Funcom delayed releasing *Age of Conan* until our concerns, and feedback from the ongoing beta testing, had been

thoroughly addressed. Once they'd done all this, they whistled at us, invited us to Oslo, cocked their little Norwegian hats in our direction and said, "Hey, what do you think of *Age of Conan* now?"

TUNE CHANGING

Well it's looking great, actually. The combat system has been changed in a number of very definite, deliberate ways, and it improves the feel of the game immensely.

The number of directions in which you can attack has been reduced, combos must now be activated instead of memorised and hopelessly recited, and enemies now display shield icons on either their front, left or right sides – a seemingly trivial inclusion but one that gives purpose and meaning to the ability to attack from one direction

rather than another. It gives us hope that a live-combat MMO can actually, seriously work, and that *Age of Conan* could be the biggest trend-bucker the genre's seen.

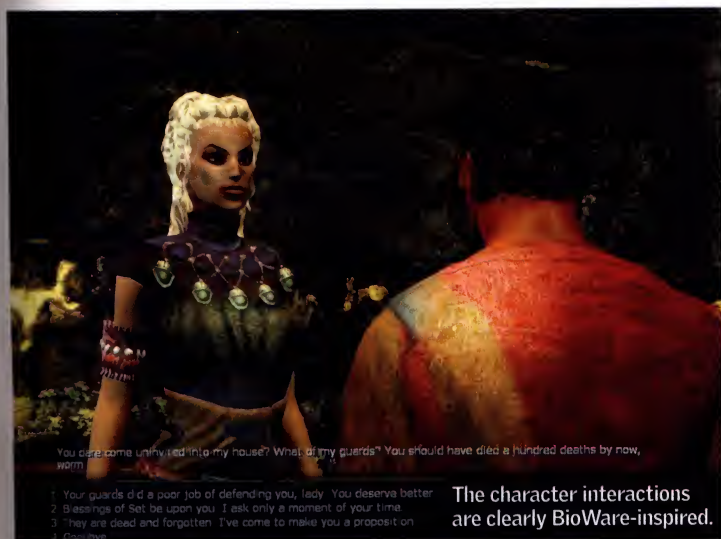
AOC's game designer, Gaute Godager, explains what's been happening these past six months. "Previously, we had a system of combat inputs much like an action game or a fighting game," he begins, "where you do



Cities are amazingly detailed.



PCZONE GAMES OF 2008



You dare come uninvited into my house? What of my guards? You should have died a hundred deaths by now, worm.

1. Your guards did a poor job of defending you, lady. You deserve better.
2. Blessings of Set be upon you. I ask only a moment of your time.
3. They are dead and forgotten. I've come to make you a proposition.
4. Courtesy.

The character interactions are clearly BioWare-inspired.

a sequence of moves like up-down-right to activate a combo. We found that when players had 15 combos that they knew, it was really hard for them to remember how to trigger a specific one." This means there'll be far fewer players mucking up when attempting the frantic keyboard gymnastics required to do their area-effect taunts and instead alt-tabbing to *iTunes* and falling off their chairs.

"That's why we took a step back and realised we had to do it differently," continues Godager, "and that's why we implemented the combo starters and the follow-up system."

These combo starters sit on your action bar at the bottom of the screen, and are activated by clicking on them – this highlights directions in which you must

attack in order to carry out the selected combo move.

Kill an enemy with a combo move and you'll carry out a fatality – anything from lopping off a head to butting your opponent to the floor and slowly, tortuously piercing him with your sword. No other MMO comes close to this level of combat interaction – it really does feel like a single player adventure game.

And why did it take six months to make such simple, yet fundamental changes to the way the game plays? "It's because you have 14 classes," answers Godager, "times 80 levels, times hundreds of abilities."

"Going through all of them is just a massive logistics job. But the beta was always running. We were always getting feedback from the



This could be you in a few months, on this mammoth.

2008's other online games

The runners in the 'MMO of 2008' battle for glory



"Score more goals!"

Football Superstars

www.footballsuperstars.com

[ETA: Q2 2008]

Monumental's *Football Superstars* is an MMO in which you, a regular football non-superstar, must rise through the ranks to become the eponymous football superstar. Seems like an extremely entertaining premise actually, as long as you don't get stuck in goal.



A pretty MMO.

Aion

www.aiononline.com [ETA: Q2 2008]

Aion looks set to be the prettiest MMO of all time. Likely to be a Korean grind-fest, it remains to be seen exactly how palatable it is to our delicate western tastes, but there's an interesting player-driven plot going on here too, although NCsoft won't tell us much about it. Come on NCsoft, sort it out.



More brown artwork.

Guild Wars 2

www.guildwars.com [ETA: TBA 2008]

Continuing the highly popular tradition of asking for nought but your adoration, *Guild Wars 2* is the sequel to one of the most popular free-to-play MMOs around. With five new playable races, new graphics and a far less restrictive world, it will no doubt straddle the genre with well-deserved pride.



By day Tortage is a multiplayer arena, but at night *Age of Conan* becomes a single-player experience



"How do you like my hat? It's chains."



Single-player missions provide narrative possibilities previously unheard of in MMOs.

players. For us, delaying the release was not such a big deal. Quality comes first."

QUALITY ASSURED

The visit to snowy Oslo saw me swanning about *Age of Conan*'s crèche area, that is, the island on which you're hand-reared through the game's first 20 levels. The city of Tortage offers a line of quests based around teaching you exactly how to use your particular class. It's no longer a single-player game in these early stages either.

Interestingly, by day Tortage is a multiplayer arena, but find a bed to sleep in and you'll wake up at night, where *Age of Conan* becomes an entirely single-player experience. You can flip between single and multiplayer just by hopping into bed.

In the single-player mode you further your 'destiny quest' by completing a series of quests based around your class. As a barbarian (AOC's rogue class), I found myself creeping along rooftops to eavesdrop on the local misfits, and stalking certain targets to subtly ensure their safety.

Whether or not this kind of quest can work outside of Tortage's single-player mode (and therefore anywhere past level 20), is unclear, but while it lasts it's an impressive and interesting change of pace from the typical 'kill X of Y' missions we're used to.

That said, a foray into some of the later level gameplay revealed it was more in tune with *World of Warcraft*'s particular flavour of questing – collecting eight silk webs by killing spiders and waiting for the loot drop.

Godager was keen to talk about various features I wouldn't have a chance to play, such as sieges. "The reason you can't see that is because it's played with two 60-man guilds, at level 80."

So does it work similarly to *World of Warcraft*'s Battlegrounds? "No, it doesn't," Godager explains, "it's different – we have the battlegrounds as well, that's a Capture the Flag game you'll be playing later. The sieges take place in three large areas, static areas of the world where guilds can build their own battlekeep. The battlekeep works like a *Warcraft* RTS, you build walls around your stuff, you put up defensive towers and build barracks. Then the other guilds siege you by building catapults, siege towers, and ladders to climb over your walls."





"Toes – self-destruct!"

"You guys, there's a dragon."



"It's something that guilds will do because it gives them such a huge reward in terms of buffing," continues Godager. "Also well, destroying other people's buildings gives them the opportunity to build their own there. You get ownership of resource nodes when you build in these PvP areas, and there's a mechanism we call the 'opportunity window' where you define when you can be attacked – so you don't get woken up in the middle of the night being told your guild is being attacked. It's epic, it's grand, it's over 100 players battling it out using mounts and siege weapons."

Oh yes, mounts. *Age of Conan*'s planning on utilising mounts in far more interesting ways than the go-faster-look-nicer steeds of *WOW*, not just horses either, but camels and woolly mammoths too. "Mounted combat changes some of the core rules of what you can and can't do," claims Godager, "it adds new elements about movement and damage. Being on horseback strips you of combos and most spells, but as a melee character you use the speed of your horse to add damage to your weapon. So the faster you ride, the more damage you do – but you can't turn very

well, that's how it balances. It's less DPS, but a shock-and-awe approach."

So we're sacrificing practicality in the name of looking awesome? Fine by us.

"We have a specific role for horseback combat in the game," continues Godager, "it's for camp-breaking. We're making camps which are like walls – you need to have players ramming it with their horses and lances in order to smash it down."

RIGHT DIRECTION

Even if this game fails, even if all of the trucks and planes carrying copies of *AOC* to high street stores across the world crash and explode, and all of the developers succumb to a deadly curse, it will still have achieved something incredible. It's kicking away at the fundamentals of the MMO genre by allowing players to interact with the world in a new and far more tactile way – something some people think impossible, but more people think exciting.

Still, having only spent a day in Hyborea, it's not possible to gauge exactly how well all of these highly ambitious features will hang together. Every time we wonder whether massive sieges will create crippling server-loads, we counter it by wondering how cool it would be to ride a woolly mammoth and attack people with its tusks. *Age of Conan* is a determined step forward for the genre, and one we're hoping doesn't falter. **PC**

Celebrating ...

20 YEARS

As Europe's No.1 web host, we have spent the past 20 years providing cutting edge services and products to millions of users. Now we are giving you a chance to start the year successfully by offering discounts on all of our products. Sign up now to take advantage of our special offers and see what a 1&1 website can do for you: www.1and1.co.uk

20 Reasons to use 1&1 ...

Secure
Data
Centre

Grow your
business
with search
marketing

Share
photos
or create
a family
page

Create
an
electronic
portfolio

Enhanced
communica-
tion through
marketing
tools

Amaze
friends with
pictures and
stories from
vacation

Microsoft®
Gold
Certified

Create a
website
for your
local
sports
team

Showcase
your hobbies
& interests
on a web
page

Money
back
guarantee
Details
online



RS 1&1

24/7
Support

Build a
forum to
share
useful in-
formation

Market
yourself
with an
online
resume

Blog
about
your
interests

Organise
your online
auctions on
one website

Use our
templates to
easily create
an appealing
website

Sell pro-
ducts from
your small
or large
business
on the web

Make money
from domain
parking or
affiliate
programs

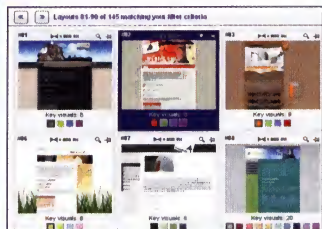
One-Stop-
Shop for
domains
and hos-
ting

50% off
all products
for the first
3 months!

Build your own website in 4

Build your own website quickly and simply without the need for a professional programmer or web designer.

1 Choose your layout

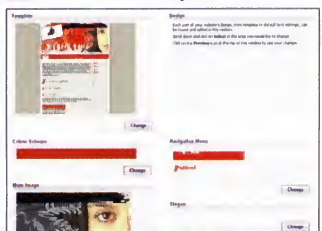


2 Arrange your pages

Navigation Tree: Online Shop

- Home
- About me
- Me and my friends
- Photo gallery
- Upload your pictures
- Latest vacation news

3 Add text and pictures



4 Publish your website



At 1&1 we specialise in bringing you the finest tools available to make your website a success. Whether you want to showcase your favourite hobbies, family events 1&1 has the right package solution for you. Build your website in 4 easy steps! We have put together a range of fantastic offers on all hosting packages.



50%

easy steps!

1&1 BEGINNER PACKAGE

The 1&1 Beginner package is the perfect way to get started on the web. It features all the basics you'll need to create your website in an instant! No HTML or programming knowledge required!

- 99.99% Up-Time Guarantee
- 250 MB web space
- 20 2 GB POP3/IMAP accounts
- 3 GB monthly traffic
- Free WebsiteBuilder (4 easy steps)
- Photo Gallery
- WebMail
- ... and much more!

£1.00
per month
for the first 3 months,
thereafter £1.99
(£2.34 Inc. VAT)*

£1.17
Inc. VAT



50% OFF!
for 3 months*

1&1 HOME PACKAGE

INCLUDES 1 FREE .CO.UK DOMAIN
For the life of your package

The 1&1 Home Package offers an exceptional value for your money. Showcase your family, hobbies or anything else you'd like to share with the world. It just takes a few minutes and your professional looking website is online.

- 99.99% Up-Time Guarantee
- 1.5 GB web space
- 400 2 GB POP3/IMAP accounts
- 20 GB monthly traffic
- Free WebsiteBuilder (4 easy steps)
- 1&1 Blog
- Photo Gallery
- SMS Manager
- 24/7 Support
- ... and much more!

£2.50
per month
for the first 3 months,
thereafter £4.99
(£5.86 Inc. VAT)*

£2.93
Inc. VAT



50% OFF!
for 3 months*

* Terms and conditions apply, please see website for further details.

Visit us now and receive 50% off all
1&1 Shared Hosting Packages, Servers and Domains!*

1and1.co.uk

or call 0870 24 11 247

OFF

50% OFF

20 YEARS

1&1

SELECTED PRODUCTS!

DOMAINS

.eu .name
.co.uk .net
.biz .info .com
.org

From **£2.62** per year
(£3.07 Inc. VAT)*

SERVERS



From **£25.00** per month
(£29.36 Inc. VAT)*

eSHOPS



From **£2.50** per month
(£2.93 Inc. VAT)*

MAIL



From **£0.35** per month
(£0.40 Inc. VAT)*

1&1

*Promotional 50% discount applies to first 3 months of a 12 month contract, after which regular prices will apply.
Terms and conditions apply. See www.1and1.co.uk for details.

visit us now **1and1.co.uk** or call 0870 24 11 247

MEMBER OF
**united
internet**



PCZONE

REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest PC games

Xmas leftovers

T WAS THE SHITE before Christmas. At least, for me it is, as I'm sitting in boring old 2007 with the dregs of the festive releases apologetically appearing in the mail for review. Meanwhile, you are jetting around on a 2008 hoverbike encountering a brave new January that I can barely dream of. Don't get me wrong, we're reviewing *Viva Piñata* this month which is well worth your money, but as for the disaster that is *BlackSite*... well, a game whose own lead developer slaps it off before it's even released is a sorry sight indeed.

A prime absentee in this review section, however, is *Soldier of Fortune: Payback* – a game whose review code has conveniently failed to appear. Our advice? Don't buy it. Don't have nostalgic thoughts about that level in the jungle in *SOF2*. If you do think of it, then slam your head against a wall until the required number of brain cells have been killed off.

We'll have the review next issue. But it's not going to be pretty.

Will Porter

Will Porter, deputy editor

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of the honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



Crysis World in Conflict The Orange Box

86

VIVA PIÑATA

Just because it's colourful, don't think this sandbox game is only for kids

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)
The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns PC ZONE's head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)
Don't shirk your duty – it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know – life's not fair.



ON THE DVD
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

The PC ZONE gaming machine

As you'll see on the many pages of resplendent reviews that follow, we list the minimum specifications you need to play each game in each review. Please refer to the publisher's website to check out their recommended optimum specs that'll make the games super-whizzy. We review all new games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X81-C2D, (pictured right). For more info on Xworks, tap into the wonder that is the Internet and type the following selection of letters into your browser: www.xworksinteractive.com.



ALSO REVIEWED

- 72 BLACKSITE
- 76 SPEEDBALL 2: TOURNAMENT
- 77 CHEGGERS PARTY QUIZ
- 78 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
- 79 NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET
- 80 RFACTOR
- 81 CULPA INNATA
- 82 GUITAR HERO III
- 83 ESCAPE FROM PARADISE CITY
- 83 ANDERSON & THE LEGACY OF CTHULHU
- 86 VIVA PIÑATA
- 88 PAINKILLER: OVERDOSE
- 88 THE SIMS: TEEN STYLE STUFF
- 89 FIFA MANAGER '08
- 89 DARKNESS WITHIN: IN PURSUIT OF LOATH NOLDER
- 90 SHADOWGROUNDS SURVIVOR
- 91 EVERQUEST II: RISE OF KUNARK
- 91 DEMOCRACY
- 92 INDIE ZONE
- Small fry but big fun
- 94 BUDGET REVIEWS
- Broken Sword: Angel of Death, Rush for Berlin, Prey and Bookworm Adventures. Eclectic or what?
- 96 BUYER'S GUIDE

PCZONE
SWEARS...

- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at letters@pczone.co.uk

REBLACKSITE



BLACKSITE

The most 'alright' game *Steve Hogarty's* ever played

DEVELOPER Midway Studios Austin
PUBLISHER Midway
WEBSITE www.blacksitegame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99

awkwardly, and some hideous clichés too, like the weak points. And some on-rails bits.

WELL IT'S OK

It's such a so-so experience that I can barely muster the effort to move my arms, let alone type. Also, I think it's against the rules to use terms like 'alright', 'not bad' and 'decent enough' to describe a game, which is making this review really hard to write. You see, there's nothing disastrously wrong with *BlackSite*, I just think it'll be difficult for anybody to be particularly enthusiastic about it – especially when you start comparing it to the likes of *Crysis*, *UT3*, *Episode 2* and *COD 4*. And *Gears of War* too. *BlackSite* is just distinctly average.

Your character refuses to do things like open doors and flick switches, like the Victoria Beckham of the battlefield, meaning all of these trivial matters must be handled by ordering your companions about. This is, effectively, the one-button squad control system. You can also use it to order your squad to focus fire on an enemy, or move to a location – neither of which you'll have to



do on anything but the hardest difficulty setting, leaving the button redundant.

Something else you won't be doing is paying attention to the squad morale system, which monitors how well you're performing and projects this into the brains of your squad. If their squad morale is high, they'll be able to bounce bullets off their faces and straight into the hearts of the enemy. If it's low, they'll cower behind corners sobbing into a puddle of their own urine. At least that's how it's supposed to work – in reality your team consists of a pair of bipolar schizophrenics, whose morale can sway madly from low to high in a matter of seconds. Cars make them happy, big billboards with Midway on them make them happy, aliens make them sad, leaving a man behind to die in Iraq has no effect.

Again, on the hardest difficulty setting this is claimed (by the game loading screen) to matter more – but practically speaking it just doesn't seem to work, or even make sense, no matter how you play. And surely entire features shouldn't become worthless simply because

AT A GLANCE...

A semi-sequel to *Area 51*, this almost completely unremarkable shooter will have you looking up 'boring' in the thesaurus.

Minimum system requirements: 3GHz processor, 1GB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card (with Pixel Shader 3.0 support).

HOW IT STACKS

CALL OF DUTY 4 89%

AREA 51 67%

BLACKSITE 59%

AT THE TIME of writing, there's been no PC demo of *BlackSite*. However, if there'd been a demo of *BlackSite*, like there was for the 360 version, you'll have already played the game's best part.

Since I don't want to encourage you to play this game, I'll just have to tell you what happens: as you enter the town of Rachel, Nevada, a house-sized alien spore tower plummets from the sky and smashes into a row of shops – sending cars and debris arcing in slow motion, twisting gently on the crest of a beautifully rendered shockwave before ploughing into either you or the tarmac.

Immediately after this, you're shooting glowing weak points on the alien spore tower's arse to make it die, while it spews out a depressingly endless stream of aliens. This is *BlackSite's* problem, it borrows from brilliantly scripted shooters like *Half-Life 2*, apes the look and feel of *Call of Duty 4* and *Gears of War*, but is at its core a mundane waltz through stupid enemies, a handful of varied locations that tend to linger





Your team consists of a pair of bipolar schizophrenics, whose morale can sway from low to high in a matter of seconds

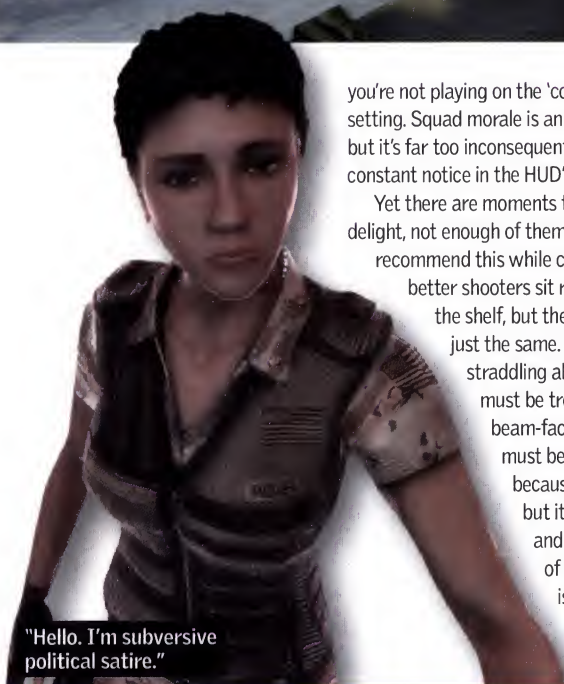


"My eyes! Zeze goggles do nothing!"



Robocop makes a grab for the stereo.

In one minute the hall will be wrecked in spectacular fashion.



you're not playing on the 'correct' difficulty setting. Squad morale is an interesting idea, but it's far too inconsequential to warrant a constant notice in the HUD's corner.

Yet there are moments that amaze and delight, not enough of them to make me recommend this while considerably better shooters sit right next to it on the shelf, but they're moments just the same. Bridge-straddling alien behemoths must be trounced, laser-beam-faced gigantosaurus must be outwitted (twice because they're reused), but it all takes place in and around the rest of the game, which is, as I've said four times now, a bit dull.

As a treat you'll sometimes come across a nice piece of dynamically breakable wall, before stopping to spend whole minutes shooting it down into little physics bits. The same breakability can be found in *BlackSite*'s statues, affording you ample opportunity to shoot off their tiny stone hands and heads. You're probably supposed to use these breakable barriers in some sort of tactical way, with guns and things, but I'm not sure I figured out exactly how to do that. In fact I'm surprised I mentioned them at all.

NO SHARING

Speaking of breaking things – and in case you were crossing off the days on your calendar until you could play the whole thing in co-op, it's not here, no co-op for you. Midway have sheared off one highly anticipated feature of *BlackSite* – one that could very well have made it stand out. The rest of the online content here is uninspired in the face of *Call of Duty 4*, which saps my enthusiasm for *BlackSite* so much that I can barely breathe while thinking about it.

It's a shame this isn't a hopelessly bad game, otherwise I could've called it *BlackShite* and been done with it, but instead it teeters on the edge of being a worthwhile purchase before deciding it's comfortable being ordinary and forgettable. It's got some well-voiced dialogue and an interesting storyline for a game with aliens, but ultimately this is an 'alright' shooter, floating in the wake of some of the best shooters the PC has ever seen. **PCZ**

Attempted political satire

Subversive observations ahoy

Watch out, *BlackSite* is a writhing plop of snide political commentary, courtesy of the demented brainwings of lead designer Harvey Smith.

Marvel as you kick the faces off bio-engineered, rogue super-soldiers designed by the US military, under a Veterans' Day Memorial banner! And a mission is called "Misunderestimated", so take that George Bush, you bad president you.

This game is so subversive my face might just cave in.



PCZONE

Graphics Pretty, but a system hog
Sound Dialogue is fun
Multiplayer Deathmatch, no co-op

- ✓ It's alright
- ✓ Decent voice-acting
- ✓ One or two excellent scenes
- ✗ Shoot-outs are boring
- ✗ I'm bored

59

You'll never go back



WIRED2FIRE

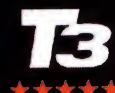
High Performance Gaming PCs

*A blend of the fastest components,
great customer service and a dash of evil.*

"It wiped the floor in our 3D benchmarks..."

PCW Magazine Oct '07

Diablo Extreme.



Building award winning PCs since 2004

Tel: 08701 999 283

www.wired2fire.co.uk

Stop cheering, that wasn't my goal!



SPEEDBALL 2: TOURNAMENT

Jon Blyth tries to remember whether anything in his childhood was really any good



DEVELOPER Kylotonn
PUBLISHER Frogster Interactive
WEBSITE
www.speedball2.com
ETA Out now (Steam)
PRICE \$35.95 (£18)

AT A GLANCE...

Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe had everyone playing their mates in their rooms in 1991. Kylotonn's reworking of the classic tries to take that onto the internet.

Minimum system requirements:
2GHz, 512MB RAM, and 128MB video card (with Pixel Shader 2.0).

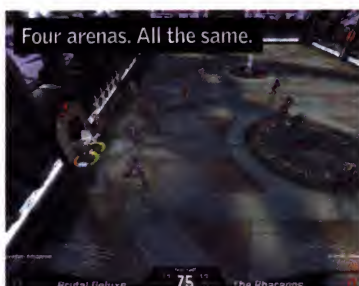
HOW IT STACKS

FOOTBALL MANAGER 90%

SENSIBLE SOCCER 2006 79%

SPEEDBALL 2: TOURNAMENT 66%

SPEEDBALL ISN'T A hard game to describe. Futuristic ultraviolent sport: job done. It is, however, difficult to overstate how universally loved it was when it first swung onto the 16-bit computers back in the early '90s. Of course, everything was brilliant back then, computers were all clockwork and we'd run around with conkers in our socks. People will drone on that *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe* was a superb balance of gameplay, with a great management and team development system that quickly had



you feeling the benefits of your upgrade decisions. These people will also hiss like wet witches should you suggest their game might not stand up to today's seven-dimensional scrutiny.

These present-weary curmudgeons needn't worry. Before you even play a game, *Speedball 2: Tournament* is an alienating affair. The menu system has to rank amongst the ugliest, and least friendly systems I've ever had to use – for example, if you want to play two players on the same computer, just like in the '90s, you have to set it up as a LAN game. The manual's no



help, either – it's like you're trying to hack the bastard.

Getting to play your first game is like trying to undress a shy jellyfish. It's even more noticeable when you're trying to upgrade your team. It's like Kylotonn decided to take all that hard-won knowledge of ergonomics, human intuition and not-kicking-the-user-in-the-balls, cram it into a sarcophagus and fire it into the sun. Oh, and it crashed a few times too.

CHILDHOOD IN RUINS

The game itself is... fine. The characters have traded comic-book bulk for the leaner, smaller look – a change which strips their former iconic charm. The opposing team colours can be so indistinct that you're left wanting a bit of (wait for it) *Brutal Deluxe*. The AI isn't a satisfying opponent, but *Speedball* should only be a single-player game when you're practicing, and playing another human is still a decent time spend.

The score-boosting stars remain an entertaining, pinball-esque distraction, the

Speedball2.com

Where the real men are



At the time of writing, the Speedball2.com website read like an advert for a chatline ("Join the community and get in touch with other real men!"), was difficult to navigate, and even harder to sign up to. If you want to play ladder competitions, or just play online, the tentatively suggested plans have been to charge a small monthly fee. Even if you wanted to pay this, you'd find it hard with the current website. But the fact they're asking for cash is just another sliver of bad will. A game that's so firmly on the fence in terms of quality doesn't need that kind of fiscal suspicion.

Wait for February's boxed version, when everything will – hopefully – be more stable and friendly

warp tunnels, multiplier loops, and random power-ups are intact, and are of a broadly similar theme. None of these things are new, but they're what makes *Speedball* the game it is. Lighting all five of your stars is the same score as two goals, so you're not just defending the ball-maws at either end of the pitch.

UNSLAMDUNK

The actual new stuff can be hit-and-miss. For example, you won't be using any of the optional views, and why include three new arenas if you're going to keep everything in the same place? Other inclusions do add something, though. Dodging adds a little spicy twist to the goal approach, and team formations can be changed on the fly, in response to your opponent's approach. What *Speedball 2: Tournament* adds in gameplay complexity is well-enough judged, so it doesn't interfere with the game's central appeal. It's just the appeal itself that feels a little shaky.



You may have played the rerelease of the original game on the 360. Disappointing, wasn't it? Disappointing, but a timely nudge from mother reality that nostalgia is an idiot mistress. Kylotonn's game is more fun than that frustrating, hectic, memory fart. But at this stage, it doesn't quite manage to be anything other than an interesting, glitchy reprise. Our most solemn, sincere advice would be to wait for February's boxed version, when everything could – hopefully – be more stable and friendly. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Not ruinous, but not thrilling
Sound Crowd roars and weak techno
Multiplayer When they sort it out

- ✓ It's *Speedball 2*...
- ✓ ...and they haven't completely killed that
- ✗ Unpleasant UI
- ✗ Well, it's *Speedball 2*
- ✗ Why is this here again?

66

I scream



Remember, Chegwin's not the enemy here.

CHEGGERS PARTY QUIZ

Come, rain, and wash this turd away



DEVELOPER Oxygen Games
PUBLISHER Oxygen Games
WEBSITE www.oxygengames.net
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

Min system req:
667GHz processor, 128MB RAM, and a 96MB 3D video card. (Weird eh?)

THERE'S A COMMON round, in this type of quiz game, where the possible answers to the question are slowly revealed. This adds tension, and causes panicked wrong answers. It's not the newest device, but it's a simple one, and impossible to get wrong.

The makers of *Cheggers Party Quiz* managed to get it wrong in two ways. In both, the answers are revealed at such a rapid rate that the entire fidgety guesswork process is completely redundant. And that, reader, is how much the developers of this slathering turd of a party game haven't got the soggiest clue about shit all. And that goes for *Alan Hansen's Sports Quiz* too, because it's identical.

That's the most subtle ways in which *Cheggers Party Quiz* fails, and basically



it was my attempt to sound academic, honking on about the nature of games before saying that this is the most indefensible, user-unfriendly, graphically stilted, nauseatingly joyless and crash-prone wreck of a game I've been forced to play in my squalid dog-basket of a life. I realise I'm wasting my passion on a game that no-one here will buy, but you weren't just forced to play it. You don't understand.

The worst thing about this bottom-feeding attempt to draw nourishment from the Chegwin name – and if there's anything more tatty to find yourself chewing on than Keith Chegwin's fame, I'm at a loss to name it – is that enough idiots will buy it to make it worthwhile.

Jon Blyth

PCZONE

10

Cheggers Plays Plop



Doesn't even look like much does it?



BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Will Porter was created by Man. He evolved. He rebelled

DEVELOPER Auran
PUBLISHER Vivendi
WEBSITE
bsgarcade.com
ETA Out now
PRICE \$19.99 (£9.70)



AT A GLANCE...

A space battle simulator that has more in common with pinball than it does anything else. Great show, terrible game.

Minimum system requirements: 2.2GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

ANYTHING BY KENTA CHO **Lots**

GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED **80%**

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA **18%**

HOW DO YOU go about creating a game for one of the most important science-fiction TV shows since *Star Trek: The Next Generation*? Why, you resurrect the ghost of *Wing Commander* of course – hiring the voice talent of the series before casting you as a new recruit under the stern tuition of Starbuck – then having you dogfight your way through the space-bullet-ridden battles seen in the first seasons of the updated *Battlestar Galactica*.

Then you have FPS sections for Caprica-based action, and when a ship gets boarded. Then, for multiplayer fun, you have Cylon base star vs. Battlestar Pegasus bouts, with tons of player-controlled units flying around everywhere. And ooh! How about a deathmatch mode in the stylings of *The Ship*, when no-one knows who the sneaky Cylon agent is?



That was fun wasn't it? Thinking about an imaginary game like that. Now lets look at what real people actually did to ruin the most intelligent, astute and relevant sci-fi franchise that's ever drawn breath: They turn it into a game where space is two-dimensional; where you might as well be flying the ship from *Asteroids* after it flunked its physics GCSE; and where Vipers have a stupid purple force field that is definitely not canon.

ANGRY NERD FACE

So basically you pilot top-down ships from the show, shooting top-down Cylon raiders with guns and missiles in a rough approximation of what happens in dogfights during the TV series – and you can turn around quickly, and roll from side to side (not up and down – just side to side). And that's pretty much it. You zip around grids filled with meteors and gas clouds, gently nuzzling the edges of bizarrely restricted space, getting killed and respawning again and again. To call playing this a drudge would be insulting to other menial, thankless tasks.

The only good thing about this game is that you can be bored by it for free for half an hour before it mercifully drops you back to the desktop with a demand for cash that you should never, ever give it.

The game's ludicrous brevity is technically another blessing, though not if

you've been suckered into parting ways with cash. You'd think the multiplayer could make up for it, but no.

This is, frankly, an amateur attempt to mop up the residue of the froth that's been coughed up by the past few years of *Battlestar*-praise. It's an insult to both fans, and the creators of the show, and serves as an lesson for developers on how not to treat licensed material. **PC**

PCZONE

Graphics Top-down ships are fairly dinky
Sound Not exactly epic
Multiplayer Like watching flies spit at each other

- ✓ It's *Battlestar Galactica*!
- ✗ It's a game made by morons
- ✗ It's more fun drinking paint
- ✗ By the gods? Why?
- ✗ Number Six doesn't live in your head

18

A total frak-job



NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET

Steve Hogarty trades midnight circuits around an Aldi car park for something even more exciting

DEVELOPER EA
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE
www.ea.com/prostreet
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

BY MOVING AWAY from its arcade roots, *ProStreet* is awkwardly straddling the gap between *Need For Speed* and *Forza*, having a firm foothold in neither, thus screwing itself over by chasing what it perceives to be the most popular kind of racing game at this point in time.

There are some very definite problems. Playing this with an Xbox 360 controller makes it impossible to drive in a straight line, due to the lack of a thumbstick dead zone (making drag races a pain). Also, the driving model has been almost completely redesigned to dispense with the series' usual arcade handling, making the game far less satisfying to play. It lacks the grit and excitement of a simulation, and it lacks the stupid fun of an arcade racer. It doesn't even have police chases.

WOOP-WOOP

The game is composed of a series of Race Days and Showdowns, each broken into

various racing events: standard 'lots of cars go round' races, drag races, time trials and drift races. These events require you to tune your car to suit the particular type of race – and these setups can then be saved as blueprints and traded online, if you enjoy doing pointless, ridiculous things like that. I, personally, throw my blueprints off a bridge, if it's all the same to you, EA.

Things pick up when the opponents eventually start to become challenging, and the tracks a bit more varied, but the game gets off to a rough start and overall feels a bit too easy and slow-paced.

Sure, there are far worse driving games than this one, but in terms of the *Need For Speed* series, this is a dud note. If you want realism go for *GTR2*, if you want arcade go for *NFS: Most Wanted*, and if you want to play a confused, bipolar racer that's lost its way in the big bold world of scary next-generation racing titles, *ProStreet* won't let you down. **PCZ**



AT A GLANCE...

The popular racing series pursues a more legal, but still chavvy, mode of competitive driving.

Minimum system requirements:
2.8GHz processor, 512MB RAM (1GB with Vista), and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

NFS: MOST WANTED 88%

NFS: UNDERGROUND 85%

NFS: PROSTREET 64%



PCZONE

Graphics At times bland, rarely impressive
Sound EA Trax! Erk
Multiplayer Race online, trade blueprints

- ✓ New damage system
- ✓ Ladies with norks – phwoar lads, eh?
- ✓ Car customisation is fun
- ✗ Handling's all new and wrong
- ✗ Too easy

64

Amateur avenue



RFACTOR

Phil Wand finds a way to play cars without breaking them

DEVELOPER Image Space Incorporated
PUBLISHER Sniper Entertainment
WEBSITE rfactor.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £24.99



AT A GLANCE...

Clunky-looking racer with open architecture that encourages people to bend and shape it in different ways. Entertaining multiplayer.

Minimum system requirements:
1.4GHz processor, 512MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 88%

rFACTOR 80%

NEED FOR SPEED: PROSTREET 64%

RFACTOR OFFERS RACING Enthusiasts the best and most expandable PC game yet. At least, that's the big sell. Having tried out the underwhelming trial download last year, there were mixed feelings when the boxed version appeared, spattered with awards.

First impressions didn't help. While there's no doubt the title's open architecture offers enormous potential in terms of modding, tweaking and customisation, Sony offered a slicker interface and more realistic-looking graphics on the PlayStation a decade ago. However, the frame rates are relentlessly high and you're not waiting for more than a few seconds before the game loads and you're straight in the driving seat.

Sadly, it's a rather disappointing drive first time out. Why do my pit crew look like

refugees from a Mega Drive game? Why are newbie-friendly driver aids unavailable on most servers? Why are the cars not deformable? Shouldn't slamming your car into the armco at 100mph or more do a bit more than illuminate the 'service due' lamp on the dashboard? A sideways glance at *DiRT* or *Need For Speed* and you'll wonder if you haven't mistakenly bought something for your mobile phone.

But look past the 20th century visuals, and the joys of multiplayer and near-limitless expansion do make it all rather alluring. *rFactor's* raison d'être is to provide a working framework from which the online community can hang new race tracks, physics models, customised cars, updated sounds, and indeed anything they like. There are DTM mods, American LeMans mods, Champ Car mods, and



Aussie V8 Supercar mods. And while there's an obligatory single-player mode, complete with obligatory daft AI players who drive nothing like real people, network or internet play is where *rFactor* comes into its own.

The netcode seems remarkably solid, with none of the annoying lag that makes opponent cars pop in and out of view. You





Back end stepping out.
Front end facing doom.



Apparently AI opponents don't
know about reverse gear.

Look past the 20th century visuals and the joys of multiplayer and near- limitless expansion make it alluring

now have no excuses when humiliated by some ten-year-old who's been allowed a quick game before bedtime.

BUFF AND SHINE

If you fancy a go yourself, you're allowed to tweak every possible aspect of your car, from paint schemes to its mechanics and the intricacies of aero handling, and anything you design can be added to the online 'pool'. Tracks require more work, but the ones provided are nicely varied and the range of layouts will require a mix of driver skills. The only downside is that they merely allude to real-life places and appear to be based largely on the designer's imagination rather than on reality.

Should you buy it? At £25: hell yes. True, it doesn't have the lustrous shine of long-established race titles such as *GTR* nor the homespun apple-pie charm of the *Need for Speed* games, and it lacks the sort of jaw-dropping graphics and sounds that first-person gamers now take for granted. But the ease with which cars can be driven by the uninitiated is commendable, and the scope for modding should also attract many a Lewis Hamilton wannabe – or at least, someone who wants to be his mechanic.

So although *rFactor* looks like a step back in time, the intangible 'feel' of things is spot-on and everything you see around you has the potential to become something entirely different. You just need to download it or cook it yourself. It's essentially *Garry's Mod* for cars. **PC**

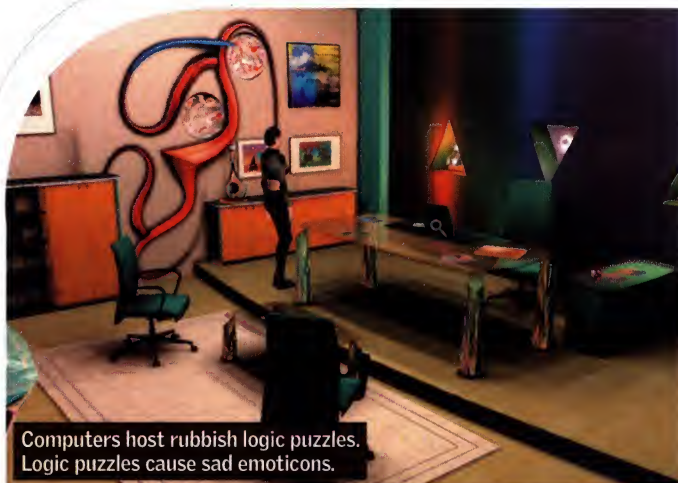
PCZONE

Graphics Behind the times
Sound Meaty engine sounds
Multiplayer None better

- ✓ Fun to drive
- ✓ Should appeal to all skill levels
- ✓ Immensely moddable
- ✗ Looks a bit crude
- ✗ Cars not deformable
- ✗ AI has blonde moments

80

Beauty beneath the bonnet



Computers host rubbish logic puzzles.
Logic puzzles cause sad emoticons.

CULPA INNATA

Demolition Man, without the acting

DEVELOPER Strategy First
PUBLISHER Momentum
WEBSITE www.culpainnata.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

Min system req:

800MHz processor, 512MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.



Fashion, eh? It's a
cruel mistress.

RELIGION, THE ARGUMENT goes, serves to protect the meek. *Culpa Innata's* vision of the near future turns this ideology on its head. It's the year 2047, and the world's developed countries have conglomerated into one absolute superpower – The World Union (Russia aren't in – ha! Enjoy Euro 2008, suckers!). Under the WU, selfishness is the currency of success, and success is rife. Disease and suffering have been eradicated, and all you have to give up to be a part of it is your privacy.

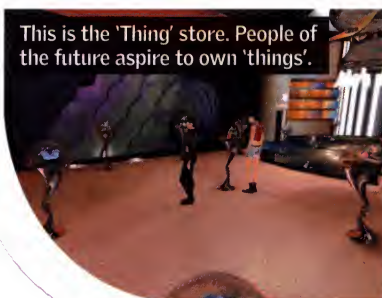
Therein lies *Culpa Innata's* only real failing as a point 'n' click adventure – as you'd expect in a world that worships the obnoxious, the people you'll meet are grate-your-own-face-off irritating. Including your character, who spends much of her time doing her best impression of Captain Cardboard.

Still, vault over this hurdle and you'll encounter a gripping adventure. As Peace Officer Phoenix Wallis, you're assigned to investigate a WU citizen's murder – a rarity indeed. This means talking to witnesses and associates, but due to WU law, you can only pester them for five minutes a day. Asking certain questions will open new locations and leads.

Culpa Innata will surprise you with its non-linearity, and it makes a welcome change from being railroaded into the usual ever-more-bizarre decisions.

Culpa Innata charmed me. Sure it's rough around the edges – the graphics aren't so much 'retro' as a 'early '90s throwback' and the flick-screen scrolling can make orientation tough, but this is a good effort. You can even go shoe shopping. Now, that's what I want from an adventure game.

Alex Dale



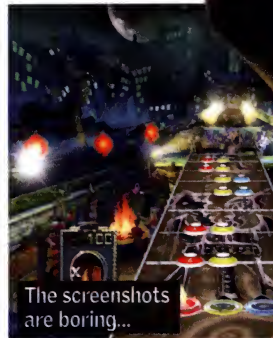
This is the 'Thing' store. People of
the future aspire to own 'things'.



PCZONE

71

Innata Gada De Vida



GUITAR HERO III

Steve Hogarty's too old to rock, no more rockin' for him

DEVELOPER Neversoft
PUBLISHER Activision/Aspyr
WEBSITE
www.guitarhero.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £49.99

TICK THE FOLLOWING boxes if they apply to you: You are a PC owner. You own no consoles. You have never played *Guitar Hero*. You enjoy rock music, guitars, and the company of your friends. If this sounds like you, buy *Guitar Hero III* right now. It's entirely original, novel and innovative, and incredibly fun to play.

If, however, you failed to tick off any of the imaginary boxes above, this is a trickier beast to gauge. As much as we love the fact that one of our favourite console games has come to

PC, it doesn't feel right, or even play well on a small monitor. And I'm betting your PC isn't central enough in your living area to easily support two players jamming at once, or indeed the small crowd of onlookers this game tends to attract. And attract onlookers it will, especially with 71 tracks from folks like Queens of the Stone Age and Weezer (if you like music), and Muse and The Killers (if you don't).

NO CONSOLATION

Guitar Hero is a console game. It's a console game somewhere deep down in its core, and unless you've set your PC up like a console – in the middle of your living room, hooked up to a massive TV – then this will never be the best way to play it. I won't even entertain the notion of playing the game with a keyboard and mouse.

And if you want to get cynical, Activision have given us the old, probably leftover, guitars from the 360 version of *Guitar Hero II*, those swines.

Even so, this is a perfect conversion. Everything's come through unscathed, but you've got to ask yourself whether you want to play *Guitar Hero* on a PC. I don't. Consoles, you win this round. **PCZ**



PCZONE

Graphics Great characters
Sound Superb track list
Multiplayer Online battles and leaderboards

- ✓ Makes you feel cool
- ✓ Great music
- ✓ Superb party game
- ✗ People don't party around PCs
- ✗ Most likely better on 360

70

The thought counted

AT A GLANCE...

A toy guitar coupled with a rhythm action game, served with over 70 mostly great rock songs. A classic on consoles, but lost on PCs.

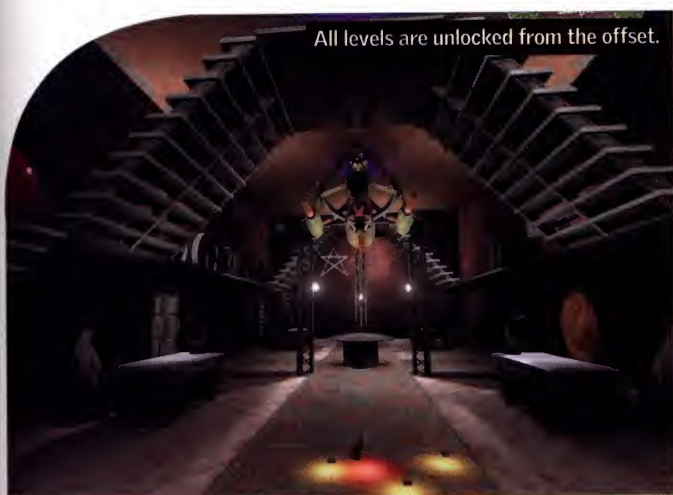
Minimum system requirements:
2.8GHz CPU, 1GB RAM (2GB with Vista), 256MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

AIR GUITARS 82%

GUITAR HERO III 70%

REAL GUITARS 39%



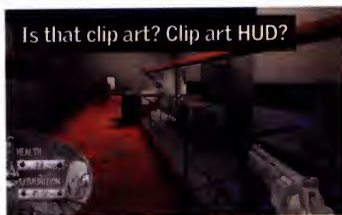
ANDERSON & THE LEGACY OF CTHULHU

Could've been spawned by the mighty Zoidberg himself



DEVELOPER Pen&Paper gamemasters
PUBLISHER JoWood
WEBSITE www.jowood.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £14.99

Min system req:
2.4GHz processor, 256MB RAM, and
a 128 MB graphics card.



IF A WORK is created from within the fandom, then surely that mixture of expertise, passion and knowledge will craft a masterpiece? Right? Some hope.

But that's unfair, because this Lovecraft-derived storyline of an investigator who descends into madness is fairly engrossing. But the writers probably should have got pros to design the game itself, because the storytelling is interspersed with some of the most bitterly tedious FPS sections ever devised.

Pick out any 10-year old FPS from your collection, turn the specs down low, replace your mouse's ball with a horse chestnut shell, shove a knitting needle through your brain and you've

got *Legacy of Cthulhu*. It's been pieced together using the commercial *FPS Creator* software, which is your first clue that this isn't going to rival *Crysis* (which is just as well, as it couldn't be less interested in running properly on *Vista*). Considering how fearfully basic this all is, some seriously bum coding must have been at work to make things run this jerkily, to speak nothing of the five-minutes-plus loading times.

Legacy of Cthulhu's lobotomised enemies reduce proceedings to little more than a health pack collect-a-thon. You can't even argue that it's cheap as the superior *Dark Corners of the Earth* is £5 at play.com.

Alex Dale



ESCAPE FROM PARADISE CITY

Grass is green?
Yes! Girls are
pretty? Hmm...

DEVELOPER Sirius Games
PUBLISHER Ascaron
WEBSITE www.paradisecity-thegame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Min system req:
2GHz processor, 512MB RAM and
a 64MB graphics card.



AND WITH THE pathetic Guns N' Roses reference out of the way early doors, we're free to discuss this intriguing *GTA*-theme RTS RPG-type thingy, which, while decent, suffers by trying to be everything to everyone and ends up not being very much at all.

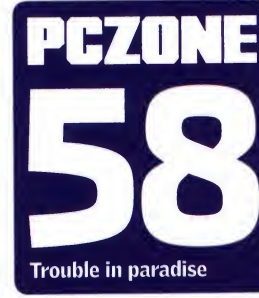
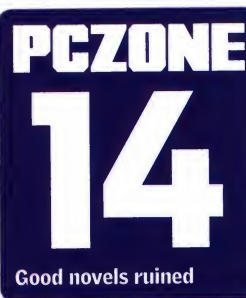
Escape from Paradise City is really an urban resource acquisition and management sim. As one of three criminals, you run around duffing up any scoundrels that cross your path. Eventually, you'll encounter the local kingpin. Punch his teeth out and he'll do a comedic jog around the block, spreading the good word about your skull-cracking skills. Congratulations:

you're the new ruler of the 'hood, and thus able to take advantage of all its resources. Some neighbourhoods are tougher than others, so it's important to choose the running order of your attacks wisely.

Unfortunately, that's all there is to this game. While it's enjoyable, *Paradise City*'s repetitive nature meant I found myself needing long, regular breaks from the action, and even the presence of two distinct playing styles doesn't help.

As a third-person action game, it inherits all of the worst qualities of a hack-and-slasher, while as a top-down RTS, it offers little more than pointing and clicking, pointing and clicking, as you'll very quickly realise. "Take me home!" you'll then plead. "Won't you PLEASE take me home?"

Alex Dale



BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG

PCZONE

SUBSCRIPTIONS OFFER

Subscribe today
and you can choose
your **free hoodie!**

OFFER 1

☐ **DIRECT DEBIT** - Pay only £9.99 every 3 months and receive a free black [L] hoodie

OFFER 2

☐ **DIRECT DEBIT** - Pay only £9.99 every 3 months and receive a free grey [M] hoodie

YOUR
DETAILS

Title Forename
Surname
Address
Postcode
Telephone
If you'd like to receive emails from PCZONE and Future Publishing and its group companies containing news, special offers and product and service information, please include your email below.
Email



GIFT
SUBSCRIPTION

If recipient's details are different from above

Title Forename
Surname
Address
Postcode

DIRECT DEBIT MANDATE

☐ **I would like to pay by Direct Debit**
(I understand that £9.99 will be debited from my account every 3 months)

	Originator's Identification Number 768195	
	Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay Direct Debits To the Manager (Bank name) Address Postcode Name(s) of account holder(s) Branch sort code Bank/Building Society account number Ref No (Office use only) Signature(s) Date	

Please pay Future Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed on this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Future Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

POST YOUR
ORDER

**PC ZONE Subscriptions, FREEPOST RLSC-SXSE-SKKT,
Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF**

OFFER CODE P037

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Details of the Direct Debit guarantee are available on request. This offer is for new subscriptions only. You will receive 13 issues per year. The minimum subscription is 12 months, but if at any time during the first 60 days you or your recipient are dissatisfied in any way, please notify us in writing and we'll refund you for all unmailed issues. In the first 60 days you can also change which magazine you're subscribing to. Personal subscription will start with the next available issue and gift availability. In the unlikely event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to substitute with items of a similar value. Please tick here if you do NOT wish to receive relevant information about products or services from Future Publishing or any of its group companies by post ☐ or telephone ☐.

SUBSCRIBE NOW GET A FREE HOODIE!



SUBSCRIBE TO BRITAIN'S BEST PC GAMES MAG TODAY!

WHY SUBSCRIBE?

- ✓ You get a free black (L) or grey (M) limited edition PC ZONE hoodie
- ✓ Save £39.96 on the cost of PC ZONE in the shops!
- ✓ You ensure that you never miss an issue of your favourite PC games mag!
- ✓ You get the magazine delivered early directly to your door, hassle-free every month!
- ✓ All for £9.99 every three months!

**ALL FOR
£9.99
EVERY THREE
MONTHS!**

GET A FREE HOODIE!

Subscribe today and
you can choose your
free hoodie!



"We're always getting emails and letters asking when we're ever going to have any official magazine tat to give away. So, finally, we have the exclusive **PC ZONE** hoodie, available in black (large size only) or grey (medium size only), modelled beautifully here by Log and Steve. Now you can hang about bus shelters and shopping malls this winter – in style and warmth! They're Fruit of the Loom hoodies too – not any old crap – this is **QUALITY** gear, mate. Subscribe today and start impressing random members of the opposite sex with your sassy new look."

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor

Black (L)

PCZONE

In The Absence Of
Sexier Hobbies
Or Bands I Like,
I Wear PC Games
Clothing

PCZONE

In The Absence Of
Sexier Hobbies
Or Bands I Like,
I Wear PC Games
Clothing

PCZONE

Grey (M)

ORDERING IS EASY!

ORDER ONLINE: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/pzv/p037

BY PHONE: CALL OUR HOTLINE **0870 8374 722** (quoting code P037)

(Lines open 8.00am-9.30pm weekdays, 8.00am-4.00pm Saturdays)

BY POST: Complete the order form opposite and send to the Freepost address:

PC ZONE Subscriptions, FREEPOST ELSC-SXSE-SKKT, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF

Child labour is cheap in *Viva Piñata*.



Menu

Pause

VIVA PIÑATA

Ed Zitron shakes and chatters from a four-hour long sweet-binge

DEVELOPER Rare/Climax
PUBLISHER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.vivapiñata.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £34.99



AT A GLANCE...

Addictive arboreal action game, mixing *Creatures* and *Harvest Moon* to make something altogether more fulfilling.

Minimum system requirements:
 1.8GHz Processor, 1GB RAM, 128MB graphics card (Pixel Shader 3.0 required).

HOW IT STACKS

VIVA PIÑATA 85%

IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES 83%

ZOO TYCOON 2 55%

VIVA PIÑATA QUESTIONS what it is to be a man, and whether I'm truly an adult. Can a man with a job and adult responsibilities really be held with respect when he can sit there and tolerate – no, enjoy – the delights of raising dancing, prancing, Technicolor sugar vessels?

The answer is yes. *Viva Piñata* is a game that defies the traditional kid/adult barrier of gaming. While on the outside it's a colourful mess of cutesy-wootsey nonsense, some light digging will uncover a game more nefariously addictive than Willy Wonka mescaline treats.

Originating on the Xbox 360, *Viva Piñata* makes you raise a selection of darling little papier-mâché animals, and use them (and their surroundings) to cajole yet more species into your domain. When they're there, you need to make sure they're content, happy in their environment, and eventually convince them that it's business time, so that you can fill your garden with their babies – which you can sell, trade online with other wannabe piñateers, or even force to perform

disgusting, incestuous acts. If you want, you can create an entire family out of their own brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers – it's rather perverse actually.

IT'S NOT ALL SEX

But wouldn't you know it, your garden isn't all about rutting. You can also grow and care

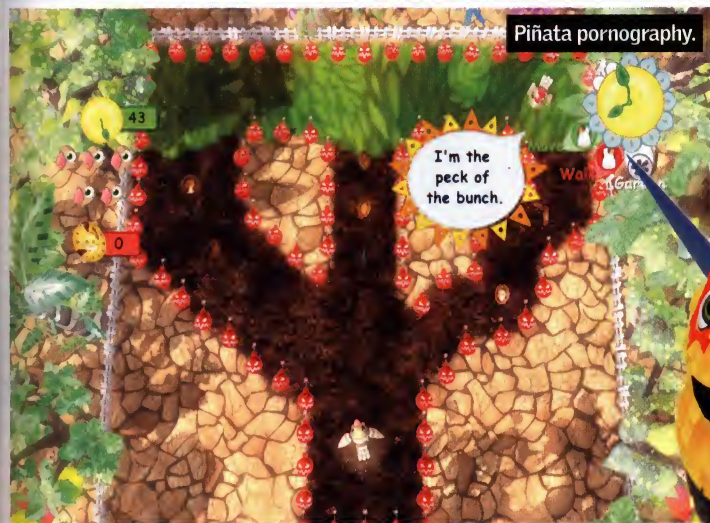


You already told her twice.



You know what time it is...

It isn't incest if they're made of chocolate



If there's one thing that you'll be doing a lot in *Viva Piñata*, it's making them have sex. To do so, you have to fulfil various "romance requirements" which, when satisfied, cause little hearts to appear over the piñatas' heads, meaning that they're in the mood to do the devil's dance. However, in the piñata kingdom, sex is performed through a strange little mini-game in which you attempt to sneak past bombs to reach your partner, and then you perform a strange, vaguely suggestive dance. This is a result of Rare missing school on the day when they taught them about the Buzzlegums and the Candaries.

for plants and flowers, which can be used to evolve piñatas, lure in particular beasts or convert the evil bastard sour piñatas to your own sickly religion.

These miscellaneous flora can also be used to garner the game's currency, chocolate coins. Chillis, for example, can be manipulated with fertiliser to turn your garden into a green-fingered *Dragon's Den* overnight.

This is where the true addiction lies in the game – Rare have succeeded in creating a world that drip-feeds you success (and achievement points, LIVE fans), while it levels you up at such a rate that just as you feel bored, you'll get something different to do or a new piñata to fawn over.

You'll be so curious as to see what they do, or how you can manipulate your garden, that you'll keep playing way past what would be called sane hours.

Some light digging will uncover a game more nefariously addictive than Willy Wonka mescaline treats



Climax's PC version also builds on the 360's version by adding in keyboard and mouse support – hoorah! This clearly lends itself to garden management, such as grassing terrain and digging ponds. However, the menus are unchanged, and still force you to select things in the top corner of the screen and making you negotiate the at-times frustrating 360's menu system. This, compounded with the usual Windows



LIVE interface nonsense of assuming that we're all surgically attached to a control pad, is an irritation.

SUGAR RUSH

These annoyances aside, *Viva Piñata* is a tight, gorgeous-looking game. The graphics are easily the most colourful I've seen outside of bizarre Japanese MMOs. Even the most hardened will find themselves astounded by this conversion – it's even smoother than the 360, and that's impressive. The graphical beauty makes it impossible to not fall into the wonderland of your garden, where the clicking, chirping and barking fauna feel like they're alive. You'll find yourself making the garden great, and of bringing more of these creatures into the world.

Viva Piñata is great for gamers of any age. If you're a casual player, play it for an hour at a time with your kids and it'll go down a storm, and if you're a power gamer you'll find many hidden delights. There's so much to do, and so many things to discover, that you'll be wandering the gardens for many a moon. Just forget that this game has a multicoloured horse on the cover, close your eyes, and get lost in the madness. **PC7**

PCZONE

Graphics Vibrant and gorgeous
Sound Animal noises and orchestras
Multiplayer Trading and community features

- ✓ Visually stunning
- ✓ Fun for all ages
- ✓ Insanely addictive
- ✗ Interface not perfect
- ✗ Windows LIVE still irks

85

Delicious



Dull. Boring. Repetitive. Poorly designed. And basically shoddy.

037
029

PAINKILLER OVERDOSE



Stuck in purgatory

DEVELOPER Dreamcatcher/Mindware
PUBLISHER JoWood
WEBSITE www.painkillergame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

Min system req:

1.5GHz processor, 384MB RAM, and a 64MB graphics card.



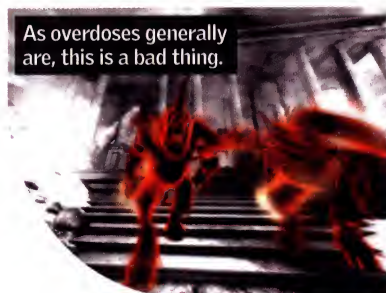
I LOVED PAINKILLER – it was big stupid gothic fun, with great weapons, imaginative hell/purgatory levels, massive enemies and OTT physics. The game's developers, People Can Fly, made a half-decent expansion pack *Battle out of Hell*, and have since moved onto an exciting new shooter project with Epic, leaving publisher Dreamcatcher to try and cobble together enough amateur talent to make this standalone companion. And yes, it's bollocks.

All the charm of the original is missing, replaced with gameplay lacking pacing and imagination, dull weapons, endless enemy respawns, poor physics, mediocre music and bog-standard graphics. To give you an

example, there's an enemy made of flames that when blasted with a shotgun, just dissipates. It's almost as unsatisfactory as your character falling into a crack in the ground and being unable to get out, or being forced to endure the terrible loading times.

Painkiller Overdose feels like the gaming equivalent of your favourite band reforming with none of the original members. Despite the new weapons, bosses and multiplayer maps, this overdose has slipped into a coma. Avoid.

Jamie Sefton



As overdoses generally are, this is a bad thing.

PCZONE
38
A headache



"This is Dad. He doesn't get me. I think I'm adopted."



THE SIMS 2: TEEN STYLE STUFF

Teenage kicks (in the balls)

DEVELOPER EA
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.thesims2.ea.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £9.99

Min system req:

1.3GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.



"My room is like, so my territory."

TO PROPERLY REVIEW *Teen Style Stuff* I decided to recreate my own teenage life. Enter my father-figure Pope John Paul II, a chubby-faced Viking-helmet wearing Lothario with his face painted to look like a tiger. His turn-ons include stinkiness. Turn-offs? Fat chicks. It'll be his job to mould me into the fine young gentleman you see before you.

And here's me, a 15 year-old girl with everything to prove and nothing to lose. The sliders won't recreate my true body weight (19 stone, back in the day), instead restricting me to the anorexic standards EA expects all young girls to adhere to.

Teen Style Stuff allows teens to express their unique style through 60

new items, whether that be trendy Emo-goth, daddy's little princess, or even trendy Emo-goth! I can't seem to find the drugs and alcohol button though, to send my teenage sims on an experimental wonder trip of intoxicated bliss. And they must be waiting until the next patch to add the option to become pregnant, drop out of school and become a hideous burden on your parents.

I would never become a hideous burden on my dad John Paul though, because I'm happy with plain old *The Sims 2* and I don't want awful money-grabbing expansions like this. If you asked your parents for this for Christmas, they almost certainly hate you now.

Steve Hogarty



"Kat says she got off with Adam. But she's a liar."

PCZONE
19
Smells like teen shit



DARKNESS WITHIN: IN PURSUIT OF LOATH NOLDER



Just cthorrible

DEVELOPER Zoetrope
PUBLISHER Lighthouse
WEBSITE www.lighthouse-interactive.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £1999

Min system req:

1.0GHz Processor, 256MB RAM (512MB RAM *Vista*), and a 128MB graphics card.

Darkness Within lacks any saving graces.



APPARENTLY INSPIRED BY the work of horror writer H.P. Lovecraft, *Darkness Within* only manages to retain traits from the legendary Cthulhu, in that to even lay sight upon it will lead to insanity. A world of nausea and terror awaits, full of terrible writing that will lead you to flay yourself and weep for your lost money.

The game's controls seem to have been designed by a drunk *Myst* fanatic, you walk around stilted 3D environs clicking your mouse in the eager hope that you will find the bizarre combination that the game demands. It's a return to the horror of the first *Discworld* game, with

random manipulations of the horrible user interface advancing the horrendous plot. Graphically, it's nigh-on comedic.

The faecal icing is the writing. Zoetrope have constructed a story with no terror, suspense, or understanding of how English works, with errant question marks and minor grammatical mistakes peppering the dialogue.

The voice acting is worse, with a lifeless drone from protagonist Loreid, who has a habit of having nightmares, and falling into nonsensical mysteries.

The plot is incoherent, with the panache of a 12-year-old's erotic Harry Potter fiction and the finish of a turd laced with pipe cleaners and glass.

Ed Zitron



FIFA MANAGER 08

Easier then the England job...

DEVELOPER EA
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.ea.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £29.99

Min system req:

1.3GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 64MB graphics card.



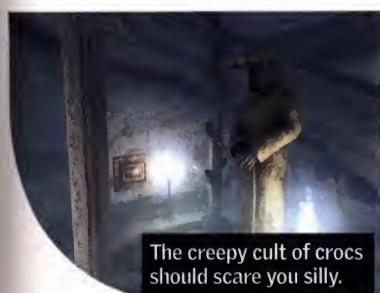
A DIRTY SECRET in the EA Sports pantheon, this has been slipped out with a minimum of fuss to offer a third way to budding Steve McLaren's. While *Football Manager* and *Championship Manager* at least concentrate on the task in hand, *FIFA Manager* establishes itself as the football management game for people who don't like football. Having to select a husband/wife/sexual partner is banal enough, but when you're told playing golf will improve your relationship with the club president, you know you're in the realms of a broader approach.

Beneath the nonsense there is a moderately playable game, albeit one hobbled by a tricky interface and largely unengaging match engine. On paper, full 3D graphics with

commentary from Motty and McCoist sounds better than watching some dots on a screen (a la *FM* and *CM*) but these things are often better left to the imagination. As a further absurd gimmick, you can even choose to manually control a players on the pitch, running around demanding the ball, and hoofing it aimlessly.

In the game's defence, it does offer something different to the number-crunching of hardcore titles, and you could wile away a couple of hours while doing something else (such as listening to the *Football Manager* podcast). Ultimately though, the best thing about this game is the *Grandstand* theme tune.

Steve Hill



PCZONE
15
H.P. Remorse

PCZONE
60
Dull to numbing



How could they cut the power? They're animals!



Never insult a bald man with a flamethrower.



Maglites are a must-have space tool.

SHADOWGROUNDS SURVIVOR

Ed Zitron is a survivor, he's not gonna give up

DEVELOPER Frozenbyte
PUBLISHER Meridian/Steam
WEBSITE

www.shadowgroundssurvivor.com

ETA Out: Now

PRICE \$19.95 (£10)



AT A GLANCE...

Remember *Alien Breed*? Like that, but it but beats its ancestor into the ground.

Minimum system requirements:
1.5GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS

SHADOWGROUNDS SURVIVOR 77%

SACRED: UNDERWORLD 72%

SHADOWGROUNDS 64%

THE VERY MENTION of the words "space" and "shooter" can often make the average games journalist imagine numbers below 50 while he hurriedly thumbs a thesaurus for words like "awful." The kicker is occasionally we get blindsided by a game that's good, and we have to take a few minutes to still our hearts.

Shadowgrounds Survivor is the sequel to a distinctly average nearly top-down shooter, and follows on the utterly forgettable storyline from where the original left off. Here, let me retell it – shooty angry aliens attack poor humans on a far off colony and you shoot them back because you have guns.

CREATURE COMFORTED

The big difference is the atmosphere. *Survivor* has a completely different look, with gorgeous, slick movement, great physics, and some remarkably fine ambient light. Your torchlight bends and moves around boxes, morphing through wire grates, and making huge, ominous shadows behind your enemies.

Control-wise, you move with WASD, shoot with the mouse, and that's all you need; movement is the essence of simplicity and fits perfectly with the constant, frantic action. It never lets up, leaving you tense and twitchy in the few-second lulls of fixing terminals and the

fleeting conversations with the survivors.

This game is so much fun that you'll forget that you really are doing the same thing again and again, *Diablo*-style. This is mitigated by the fact you change characters several times, each with different weapons, and the quasi-RPG upgrade and experience system that keeps things a little different throughout.

Undoubtedly, many people will skip *Shadowgrounds Survivor*, regardless of its budget price. However, while the game has got a boring-arsed story, and can be repetitive, it's so unbelievably enjoyable, so fluid to control, and so chillingly good-looking that you'll forget all that. *Shadowgrounds Survivor* is truly a visceral, retro experience that takes us back to a warmer, happier time. **PC7**

The dynamic lighting is stunning.



Take your time. I'm only being mauled.

PCZONE

Graphics Moody visuals
Sound Hilarious alien noises
Multiplayer Two-player co-op

- ✓ Great atmosphere
- ✓ Amazingly fluid controls
- ✓ Fantastic graphics
- ✗ Repetitious
- ✗ Naff story

77
The fittest



DEMOCRACY

"I won't quit... I won't quit... I quit."

DEVELOPER Positech Games
PUBLISHER Ascaron
WEBSITE www.positech.co.uk/democracy
ETA 25 January
PRICE £29.99/£13 (download)

Min system req:
600MHz processor, 512MB RAM,
and a 64MB graphics card.



I'M THE KIND of bleeding-heart animal-loving liberal whose idea of a 'dirty weekend' is scrubbing oil-encrusted cormorants off the coast of Norfolk, so naturally I was looking forward to playing PM. Birmingham New Street would be first to go, razed and replaced with a hummingbird sanctuary. Things didn't go to plan.

Not five minutes into *Democracy*, I found myself choking back tears as I relaxed animal safety laws to get the vote of the farmers.

This annoyed the liberals, so I had to do what anyone would do and legalised prostitution, which got under the nose of the religious sector.

With a re-election looming, I hastily belied my atheist beliefs and ramped up the Religious Education in schools, which again irked the liberals, but my

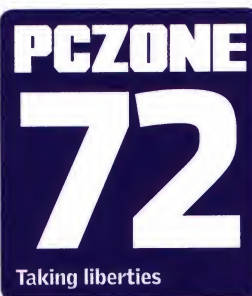
free and easy handgun laws met their approval and that of the patriots.

The parents should have minded, but they were too busy bearing shit-eating grins over my generous child benefit scheme. That's me safe – until the next re-election.

That's *Democracy* in a nutshell – a balancing act that'll see you betraying your morals (I even installed speed cameras!) for votes and will, if nothing else, allow you a better understanding of why things are the way they are.

This political simulator is easy to pick up and strangely compelling, and is best summed up by a Donald Rumsfeld quote on one of the interstitial screens, "If you try to please everybody, someone's not going to like it."

Alex Dale



EVERQUEST II: RISE OF KUNARK

Dragons vs parrots? Cool!

DEVELOPER Sony Online Entertainment
PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment
WEBSITE everquest2.station.sony.com
ETA Out Now
PRICE £19.99 (boxed with *EverQuest II*)

Min system req:
1GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a
64MB graphics card.

THE WRITERS AND designers at Sony Online have the most incredible efficiency. They produce expansions, content, and additions to *EverQuest II* faster than horses produce shit. And thankfully *Rise of Kunark* is a first-rate addition to the world, and is value for money.

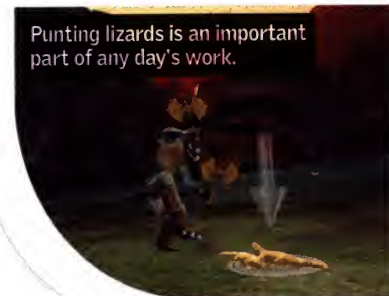
Newbies can start as the Sarnak, a new race taken from *EverQuest: The Ruins of Kunark*. This evil race starts in the midst of a war against some angry parrot-people, and has arguably one of the best learning curves I've seen in an MMO to date.

Rise of Kunark eases you into the game with so many quests and so few distractions that you'll forget the grind completely – and that's saying something.

Higher-level players can look forward to more of everything, as there's new content for level 65-80 players, who can now conquer a great deal of revamped *Ruins* content. Former *EverQuest* players can enjoy revisiting things they've seen in the original, and *EQ2* players have a huge amount of new stuff to tear through.

This is highly recommended – it's essential for older players, and for those still on the fence over *EverQuest II*, now is probably the best time you've had to give it a go.

Ed Zitron



You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.

indiezone



Martin Korda takes command of a war-filled indie gaming month

MACHINES AT WAR

DEVELOPER Isotope 244 WEBSITE www.isotope244.com PRICE \$19.95 (£10)

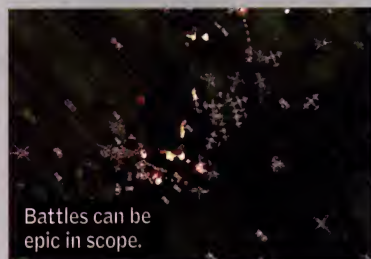
HELLO, WHAT'S THIS? An immersive, adept and entertaining indie RTS? You'd better believe it, my friends, because *Machines at War* is positively bursting with quality and a subtle depth that becomes increasingly apparent the more time you spend on its intense battlefields.

Visually, there's little to get clammy about, but if you can see past the fuzzy

top-down visuals and ignore the slightly suspect unit selection system, you'll find war zones packed with hundreds of ground and air units, excellent defensive options, fully destructible terrain, an outstanding research tree that filters you down certain routes and impacts your tactical options, and decent AI that counters your attacks and attempts to stifle your supply lines.

Machines at War is instantly playable, even for softcore RTS players, and there's enough in-game player guidance to make up for the absence of a tutorial. Had its varied battlegrounds been weaved into a campaign, *Machines at War* would have scored even higher. Regardless, it's still a blast.

PCZONE
77



Battles can be epic in scope.

INDIE ZONE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH



Admittedly, the visuals aren't great.

KING MANIA

DEVELOPER 300AD WEBSITE kingmania.300ad.com PRICE \$19.95 (£10)

IF YOU CAST your mind back to Issue 180 you'll remember a game called *Galcon*, an intergalactic strategy game in which you capture warship-producing planets while shifting your armies from one planet to the next to overpower your opponent.

In many ways, *King Mania* is very similar, only it's set in medieval times and has more depth. You and your opponent begin each level in a castle which creates peasants (who generate resources) and soldiers. Dotted around each map are villages which you must capture and fortify. You must ensure that you control enough castles and villages to overpower your foe.

Excellent upgrades, humour, a branching campaign, and magical towers that unleash devastating spells make for a quick and fun fix of territory snatching.



More upgrades than you can shake a wand at.

PCZONE
75



Capture villages before attacking your opponent.

DEEP QUEST

DEVELOPER Nexgen Studio

WEBSITE www.nexgenstudio.com/deepquest.html PRICE \$19.99 (£10)

HAVE YOU EVER wished you could get to grips with the strategic complexities of RTS gameplay, but have yet to find a game that eases you into the genre? Then look no further, because your salvation has arrived.

Deep Quest is a simplistic and easy-to-understand real-time war game containing all of the basics of its more illustrious peers and none of those over complex micromanagement shenanigans that can prove so off-putting.

Set beneath the deep blue sea, you command a race called the Abyssians,

who are at war with the Gordlons. The first few missions act as a series of tutorials, after which you're left to your own devices in the remaining, slightly more taxing levels.

Deep Quest's cute characters and never patronising approach ensure that it's just as suitable for kids as for the more mature gamer.

Sure, it may fail to bring anything new to the table, but as a fun training aid, it hits all of the right notes.

PCZONE
60



GLADIATOR TRIALS II

DEVELOPER Tagged Software WEBSITE www.gladiatortrials2.com PRICE \$24.95 (£12)



THE ROMANS ALWAYS seem to be a popular topic for indie game devs. However, we've yet to see a truly excellent Roman-based offering in these parts and *Gladiator Trials II* isn't about to buck that trend.

To give it its dues, it makes a decent try at providing a fun experience, dividing its attentions between the creation of a thriving training camp (in which slaves work and gladiators prepare themselves for an early grave), and turn-based arena combat in which your killers battle for cash prizes.

As well as ensuring that your warriors are kitted out with the best

equipment (purchasable from the market) you also need to keep your minions happy by winning enough funds to pay their wages.

The problem is both sections are more threadbare than a cheap rug, with the mouse-clicking combat lacklustre (though things do get interesting once traps get involved). Throw in some poor menus and dated graphics, and you're left with an underwhelming experience, which despite some merits, sadly gets the a thumbs down.

PCZONE
54

TOP 5 STRATEGY GAMES



NAKED WAR

www.zee-3.com/nakedwar

Reviewed Issue 177

Addictive and visually impressive, *Naked War* is a king amongst turn-based indie games. Played via email, your team of four soldiers must kill off the opposition with guile, tactics and some serious firepower. Absolutely essential for any gamer, this strategy game is an outright king in the vaulted halls of independent gaming.



BRASS HATS

www.brasshats.com

Reviewed Issue 189

Brass Hats's engaging gameplay is accessible to all and yet challenging enough for even the most hardened turn-based nut.



STYRATEC

styratec.rakeingrass.com

Reviewed Issue 175

Guide your hero's team through adventures in a mystical world. The limited number of turns per map makes for a serious challenge.

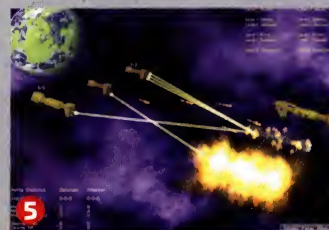


WAR ON FOLVOS

www.lonelytroops.com

Reviewed Issue 179

Highly strategic levels, crisp enemy AI and a rousing soundtrack make this one of the best indie sci-fi turn-based games around.



STARSHIP KINGDOM

www.apexzone.com/starshipkingdom.php

Reviewed Issue 181

This sci-fi war game injects originality into the *Risk* template. Four-phase turns and impressive real-time battles set it apart.

BUDGET

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

If cost-cutting is the name of your game, *Ed Zitron* is here to slice away

PREY

PUBLISHER: 2K Games **WEBSITE:** www.direct2drive.com **PRICE:** \$19.95 (£9.95)

THERE ARE MANY times in your life that will involve you opening up your chakra – we advise that you do so at this moment, as deadbeat Cherokee-powered FPS *Prey* is available on the internets for a mere £10.

Taking about 11 years to come out, *Prey* isn't the Messiah of gaming, but brings a nice mystical twist to the genre with a selection of disgusting, yet curious-looking, creatures. While *Prey* is fairly dramatic throughout – it's nothing Oscar-winning, but you'll be challenged not to get drawn into Tommy's story and finish it through to the end.

I mean, you technically can't even die, merely passing on to the spirit realm where you can eventually can regain your life.

With a selection of mildly disturbing weaponry and a plot that takes you from a bar to the ends of reality (as you do), it's a game that you should really play for this peasant's price.



Dressed to the nines, Jim prepared for a night out.



Hello, and welcome to Chelmsford.



Not the flying jellyfish dream again. Not again.



This patched version comes with this strange lady.

**PCZONE
82**

**THIS
MONTH
PCZONE
SAVED MONEY BY...**

Ed making packed lunches out of cold meats.

Saving: £20

Will buying a kick-arse PC, but not a monitor.

Saving: £200

Richard finding 1,000 pesos on the street.

Saving: 20p



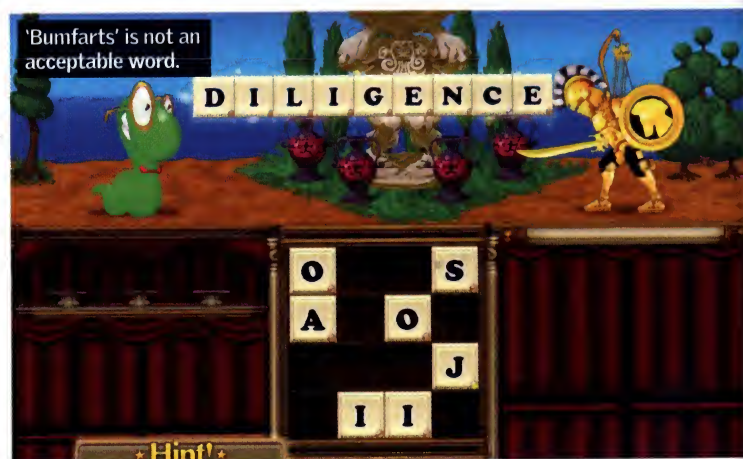
BOOKWORM ADVENTURES

PUBLISHER: Popcap **WEBSITE:** www.steampowered.com **PRICE:** \$19.95 (£9.95)

A GLORIFIED VERSION of Scrabble that makes my tired eyes look up from my cup of gruel is a rare thing, but *Bookworm Adventures* is that game.

Putting you in a side-scrolling, Faux-RPG environment, you have to complete words to do damage to your foes, while using special tiles to poison or damage your enemies, or even heal yourself. It's like *Ultima Underworld*'s magic system, where you spelled out magic words using runes – but with real words.

This all may sound rather dull, but the crux of it is *Bookworm's* seemingly unnatural, ungodly addictive qualities. What begins as a mere few minutes of laughter will become a feverish hour of trying to make a pile of nonsensical letters turn into the word that will kill the gigantic magical goat in front of you. You'll then howl with joy as the particular



item you've equipped saves your wormly buttocks, especially when you manage to sneak past the filter and put in a rude word and kill an enemy with it.

Yes, readers, you can kill an enemy with your arse. Well, maybe. Pick this up. You simply must.

**PCZONE
85**

RUSH FOR BERLIN

PUBLISHER: Deep Silver WEBSITE: www.paradoxplaza.com PRICE: £5

RTS GAMES THESE days are less dime-a-dozen and more a-penny-a-dozen, with your *Supreme Commanders*, *Companies of Heroes*, and all sorts of World War II knockoffs available quite literally anywhere – check under your carpet, you'll find one.

Odds are, however, it won't be *Rush For Berlin*, which is a competent RTS from the bods who made *Codename: Panzers*. It's the very much generic World

War II story, with you rolling tanks towards other tanks, eventually facing other tanks in a war and blowing up the other tanks, to go and kill more tanks.

There is a slightly different feel to the game, in that you (and it feels everybody else) is rushing to get to the German capital, and while historically it's to seize control, in reality it feels more like you're rushing for a good deal on batteries, cabbage, or something equally mundane.

The commodity is time, but the effect is boring.

Excuse us for not jumping for joy, but we have seen a lot of World War II games, including the much better *Company of Heroes*, and we'd rather think you'd be better buying that instead.

PCZONE
45



BROKEN SWORD: ANGEL OF DEATH

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE: www.broken-sword.com PRICE £10

ONE OF THE few spots of the adventure-game industry that doesn't stink like an elephant's nads makes its return in a little bit of style, but nothing that's going to rock you to the core.

Naturally you're dealing with the relics of those nasty Knights Templar, who seem to have a bad habit of leaving stuff around for you to find and get into mischief pursuing. Though it has its frustrating elements, and is less engaging than its prequels, George and Nico are always good company.

PCZONE
65

SECRET FILES: TUNGUSKA

PUBLISHER Dreamcatcher WEBSITE: www.secretfiles-game.com PRICE £5

POINT-AND-CLICK titles are mostly a thing of the past, but every so often one pops up to entertain the three people still interested in them.

Tunguska has plenty of pointing, clicking and clue-finding. It's worth a go if you like that kind of thing.

PCZONE
55



And the rest...

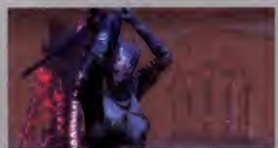
The most bargainous compilations out there...



COMPANY OF HEROES: GOLD EDITION
£17.99, THQ

Relive Relic's thoroughly brilliant World War II RTS, along with the addition of the *Opposing Fronts* follow up, adding on DirectX 10 support and a pair of new campaigns to the original. This is an absolutely fantastic deal.

PCZONE
90



WORLD OF NEVERWINTER NIGHTS: PC PACK
£39.99, ATARI

While it's not cheap, the *World of Neverwinter Nights* is the most complete *NWN* experience available, giving you the first game, both expansions and the sequel for a not-too-shabby price. If fantasy frolicking is your cup of tea, this is a huge pot.

PCZONE
83



SUPREME COMMANDER: GOLD EDITION
£17.99, THQ

With the recent extension, *Supreme Commander* has a hell of a lot of RTS added life in it, and *Forged Alliance* tweaks a great deal of problems with the main game, thus making this an essential buy for pretty much any RTS gamer.

PCZONE
85

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1 HALF-LIFE 2

\$19.95 (£10), STEAM

Do we really need to explain why you need Gordon's physics-based outing? For a tenner? OK then, it's PC gaming at its finest. Happy now?



2 FAR CRY

£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

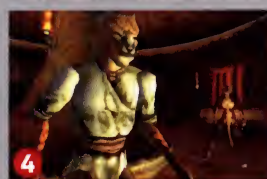
An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI. Formerly the only real rival to the FPS dominance of *Half-Life 2*.



3 COMPANY OF HEROES

\$29.95 (£15), STEAM

Relic's title made the WWII RTS into an enjoyable genre again, with an excellent campaign and taut, tactical gameplay.



4 THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

£4.99, MASTERTRONIC

The precursor to *Oblivion*, Bethesda's classic free-roaming RPG offers cheap goblin bashing.



5 PSYCHONAUTS

\$19.95 (£9.99), STEAM

Brilliant humour, creative level design and a range of psychic powers propel this title into the stratosphere of platformers.



A nun is always hanging around PC ZONE towers.

BUYER'S GUIDE

Still rejigged and improved for your game-buying pleasure



PCZONE TOP 5 THINGS THAT NEVER SHOULD BE IN GAMES

- 1 KEITH CHEGWIN
- 2 PIPPA FUNNELL
- 3 BRATZ
- 4 ZOOL
- 5 GIANT RATS



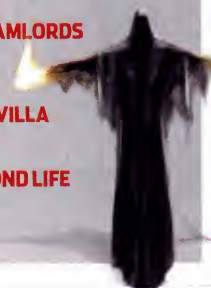
PCZONE TOP 5 TERMS TO REMOVE FROM THE INTERNET

- 1 BLOGOSPHERE
- 2 INTERWEB, INTERNETS, ETC.
- 3 CHEGGERS
- 4 WEB 2.0
- 5 VLOG



PCZONE TOP 5 WORST PREMISES FOR GAMES

- 1 CHEGGERS' PARTY QUIZ
- 2 IRONCLAW ONLINE
- 3 DREAMLORDS
- 4 3D SEX VILLA
- 5 SECOND LIFE



FPS

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES

PCZ Issues: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)

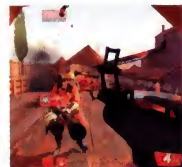
Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in – but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.



BIOSHOCK

PCZ Issue: 185 – 96%

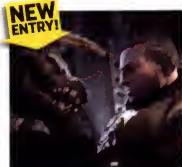
The spiritual sequel to *System Shock 2*, *BioShock* will suck you right into its intricate, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.



TEAM FORTRESS 2

PCZ Issue: 187 – 93%

Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together everything that's good about online shooters and topping it all off with some superb animation to rival Pixar's films.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

PCZ Issue: 189 – 90%

The daddy of online shooters returns with a mule-kick of intense deathmatch, epic vehicles, high-speed combat, Warfare mode, and a graphical sheen that outdoes its ageing insta-gib rivals.



BATTLEFIELD 2

PCZ Issue: 157 – 94%

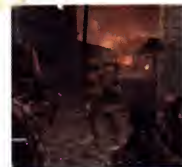
If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the ability to zap people with medic shock pads.



CRYSIS

PCZ Issue: 188 – 92%

A retooled, condensed *Far Cry* for newer hardware, with *Crysis*'s neat nanosuit and 'anything can happen' action-bubble mentality making it a winner. The last act falters, but the Korean-bullying is endlessly replayable.



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

PCZ Issue: 188 – 89%

Big, brash and extremely loud, Infinity Ward's latest ultra-intense shooter offers some strikingly original military action. With superb multiplayer in tow, it's often an utter delight to play.

Strategy

Must buy!



COMPANY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 173 – 93%

The fact that despite hailing from that most overpopulated of genres, the WWII RTS, *Company of Heroes* is still number one is a testament to how utterly refined and slick it is. Relic have taken the best bits from strategy games and stripped out the crap, leaving you with a game that's fun, intelligent, accessible, taxing, tactical and exciting. And with that many positive words in one sentence, you know it must be good.



WORLD IN CONFLICT

PCZ Issue: 186 – 92%

A stunning RTS set at the height of the cold war, *World in Conflict* offers genuinely innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you're ever likely to see.



CIVILIZATION IV

PCZ Issue: 162 – 92%

A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place indeed, and the latest version is the greatest yet. It's now available with added warmongering and diplomacy thanks to the expansion packs.



MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

PCZ Issue: 175 – 91%

A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Now complemented by the excellent *Kingdoms* expansion.



RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS

PCZ Issue: 168 – 91%

Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and *Total War* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation and imagination.



SUPREME COMMANDER

PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%

Massive battles and armies composed of thousands of air, sea and land units? Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? One of the most unique RTS titles around? Check, check and check.



LOTR: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

PCZ Issue: 149 – 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the genre-dominating *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



GEARS OF WAR

PCZ Issue: 188 – 90%

Who knew the all-conquering console title would work so well with a mouse and keyboard? *GOW*'s skirmishes against the aggressive Locust Horde are enjoyably tactical, while its cover system and difficulty level combine to make you genuinely fear the bullets flying around you. With the battle against the almighty Brumak near the game's close, the PC has the best version of an already excellent shooter. So hooray for us.



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PCZ Issue: 136 – 93%

A bit frayed around the edges now, but it still shows how to do bullet-time right. A noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkably evergreen gun action mean that Payne is still a force to contend with.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

PCZ Issue: 155 – 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this – a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious – *San Andreas* is the pinnacle of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

PCZ Issue: 154 – 91%

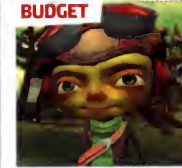
A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT

PCZ Issue: 159 – 90%

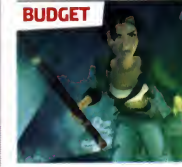
Murder most foul, with you as the killer. Boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



PSYCHONAUTS

PCZ Issue: 156 – 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker – *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PCZ Issue: 138 – 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.

MMOs

Must buy!



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



LOTR ONLINE

PCZ Issue: 182 - 87%
A near-perfect representation of Tolkien's stories, with solid combat and engaging plots, all bound up in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! The whole of Middle-earth awaits...



EVERQUEST II

PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original game a much-needed lick of paint, and adds a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A timesink in a good way.



GUILD WARS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. A lot of polish and thought have been applied, and there are no subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EVE ONLINE

PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy, and this space sim has come the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy - it's up to you.

Simulation

BUDGET



X2: REUNION

PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



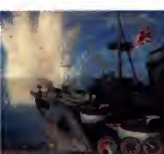
MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X

PCZ Issue: 175 - 89%
This latest iteration in the *Microsoft Flight Sim* series is the biggest since they started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



FREELANCER

PCZ Issue: 156 - 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



SILENT HUNTER 4: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC

PCZ Issue: 181 - 82%
If a life beneath the waves tickles your fancy, then this submarine simulator fits the bill. Tactics, torpedoes, sonar and sailors combine to make the ultimate ship-sinker.

Driving/Racing

Must buy!



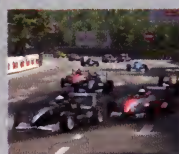
GT2

PCZ Issue: 173 - 92%
Can't afford a Ferrari? Then pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams. It comes with an improved driving model, new modes and many other improvements.



GT LEGENDS

PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GT* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends*, a natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, does the business for historical driving. It's like the swinging '60s never ended.



LIVE FOR SPEED

PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. *LFS* offers realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers, that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT

PCZ Issue: 183 - 88%
The rallying legend returns, and this time he treats us to a host of other off-road events, an excitable Travis Pastrana and some of the best-looking graphics to grace any driving game on PC so far.



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%
Thrill-packed racer from EA, this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like Westwood with the car pimping, though.

Oddball



PORTAL

PCZ Issue: 187 - 89%
Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurling yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but games are rarely more delightful.



GARRY'S MOD

PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%
The god game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGs. Try it out and see for yourself.



PEGGLE EXTREME

PCZ Issue: 183 - 83%
A weeping unicorn and a sequence of bagatelle-inspired peg-bouncing puzzles combine to make a casual game of unparalleled addictiveness. If you doubt us, you haven't played it.



THE MOVIES

PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%
Life as a movie mogul - games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



EVIL GENIUS

PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say, "No, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well, now you can, with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.

Sport

Must buy!



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008

PCZ Issue: 188 - 90%
The latest version of the 'till playing at 3am' title is all about noob-attraction and an improved interface. As usual, *FM* succeeds, and is the best management sim on earth.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

PCZ Issue: 188 - 87%
Still in a different league to *FIFA*, *PES* lacks the official stamp but offers amazingly lifelike football. Whether it's end-to-end stuff or a nil-nil slog, it's always compelling.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Not the most recent version, but still our favourite, *Tiger 06* has you time-travelling as Mr Woods. The best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



FIFA 08

PCZ Issue: 188 - 80%
A veritable compendium of all that is football, and a good sports game too, the recent *FIFA* still lags behind *PES*, but benefits from layers of EA spit and polish. A decent variant of the beautiful game.



NHL 08

PCZ Issue: 187 - 80%
Bringing the American sport we 'get' (it's like *Speedball!*) to our PCs, the latest *NHL* is chock-full of large Canadians knocking seven bells out of each other. Exciting, fast, smooth and exhilarating.

Role-playing games

Must buy!



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%
Oblivion's sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



THE WITCHER

PCZ Issue: 188 - 88%
Adult and intelligent (if a little sexist), the world of *The Witcher* is as fascinating as it is violent and corrupt. With moral bite and an epic story, this has come out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Quite possibly the most intimidating yet wonderful game we've ever played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX

PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of the gaming world.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

Q1 2008

AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES
ASSASSIN'S CREED
BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY
FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR
UNIVERSE AT WAR: EARTH ASSAULT
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - SOULSTORM

EIDOS
UBISOFT
UBISOFT
THQ
SEGA
THQ

Q2 2008

ALONE IN THE DARK
COMMAND & CONQUER 3: KANE'S WRATH
FAR CRY 2
LEFT 4 DEAD
LEGENDARY: THE BOX
STALKER: CLEAR SKY

ATARI
EA
UBISOFT
VALVE
GAMECOCK
GSC GAME WORLD

Q3 2008

FALLOUT 3
PROJECT ORIGIN

BETHESDA
WARNER BROTHERS

TBC 2008

ALAN WAKE
DEUS EX 3
DRAGON AGE
GUILD WARS 2
LOST: THE VIDEO GAME
OPERATION FLASHPOINT 2: DRAGON RISING
RACE DRIVER: GRID
SPACE SIEGE
SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION
SPORE
STARCRRAFT II
WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING

MICROSOFT
EIDOS
BIOWARE
NCSOFT
UBISOFT
CODEMASTERS
CODEMASTERS
SEGA
UBISOFT
EA
VIVENDI GAMES
GOA/EA
VIVENDI GAMES

WII | GAME BOY | DS | GAMECUBE

Nintendo®

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

Exclusive!

It's Killing Time!

Become the world's **deadliest assassin** in our exclusive preview of **No More Heroes!**

千代田市 千代田市 千代田市
千代田市 千代田市 千代田市
千代田市 千代田市 千代田市

EXCLUSIVE FIRST PLAY! BECOME THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST ASSASSIN IN NO MORE HEROES!



Future
media entertainment



Free 2008 Official Nintendo Calendar!

Nintendo®
THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

Issue 25 On Sale Now!

**PCZONE**

HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

DIY is dying

I'VE SEEN SOMETHING interesting. Friends who used to build PCs from meticulously researched parts are now buying ready-built systems. They buy online and are playing games by 7pm the next day.

This could just be that they're getting old, and buying a machine off the shelf is what you do when you're past working a screwdriver, but I think it's likely that the difference in cost is so marginal these days that it's no longer worth the effort.

I'm not suggesting the component market will disappear overnight, but I think that the excitement of building your own rig is no longer what it was. Many of today's buyers put warranty, reliability, noise and convenience before price. And who can blame them? It's reassuring to know that in the event something goes wrong, you can lift the phone and have someone come round and fix it for you.

The second interesting thing is that more people are bringing laptops to LAN parties. I used to keep a tube of Tipp-Ex handy to cover chips in the paintwork where tower cases had swung into door frames, but the tube has long since dried up. Almost everyone turns up with a notebook in a softly padded bag, which to my annoyance loads *Team Fortress 2* levels faster than my workstation.

With NVIDIA's 8800M mobile chips loving even the most demanding games, could this really be end of the PC desktop?

Phil Wand, hardware editor

RACING ON

AMD and Intel launch new gaming

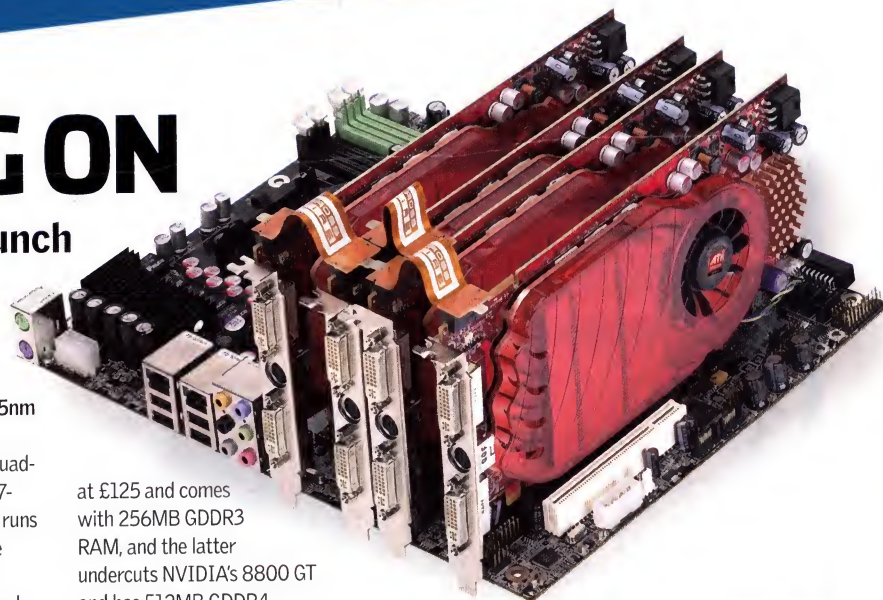
AMD HAVE INTRODUCED their high-end gaming platform, known as 'Spider', one week after Intel's new 45nm Penryn.

Spider is an umbrella term for the quad-core Phenom, new Radeon line-up and 7-Series chipset. The Phenom 9500 CPU runs at 2.2GHz, the 9600 at 2.3GHz and the 9700 at 2.4GHz. All are Socket AM2+ products with HyperTransport 3.0, though the 9700 is currently affected by problems with 65nm manufacturing and may not be available until 2008. The 9500 costs £175 and the 9600 is priced just shy of £200.

AMD's platform includes ATI RV670-series cards, otherwise known as the Radeon HD 3850 and HD 3870. The former is priced

at £125 and comes with 256MB GDDR3 RAM, and the latter undercuts NVIDIA's 8800 GT and has 512MB GDDR4.

While the HD 3870 is cheaper than the £180 8800 GT graphics card, it's marginally slower, and while the Phenom 9600 will cost you more than a £165 Q6600 quad-core processor, it's actually slower as well. Any takers? Thought not. amd.com



New mobos! New graphics cards! New processors! Still no faster!

PHYSICS ON HOLD



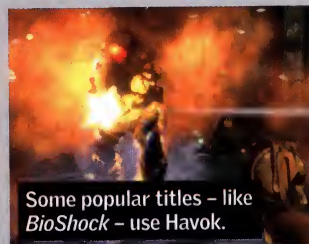
Havok FX now unlikely to see the light of day

AS PREDICTED, AMD are unlikely to release Havok FX – a physics engine that uses the power of their graphics chips to create effects.

The head of Developer Relations at AMD explained that, while titles exist with the ability to use a modern GPU's enormous power to generate physics, there won't be many of them.

There are two reasons for this: after Intel's acquisition of Havok earlier this year, it made little sense for AMD to promote what had become an Intel product; and it makes more sense for the company to make proper use of their expanding multi-core processor line instead.

Intel's purchase hasn't been



Some popular titles – like *BioShock* – use Havok.

met with glee. NVIDIA CEO Jen-Hsun Huang told IT press, "I'm not sure why they bought that company, to tell you the truth. It might give them some advantages with respect to Havok, but it obviously creates negative synergies everywhere else." ati.amd.com

NEWS ROUND-UP

The upgraded 8800 GTS should be in stores at the beginning of December, so don't go buying one before then. The new 512MB card uses the same GPU as the old, but has tweaked clock speeds and as many stream processors as the GTX in order to raise it above the all conquering 8800 GT. nvidia.com

NVIDIA have also announced their 8800M GTS and GTX video processors for laptops. At present these are the fastest chips you can configure into your gaming notebook, and are must-haves for gamers looking to shift to mobile computing at Christmas. Don't buy a laptop without one. intel.com

The Inquirer reports that Koreans are spoiled with a fantastic ASUS bundle of the company's 8800 GT together with shooter du jour *Crysis*. Why not us? asus.com

WARNING: THIS MONTH'S HARD WORDS

BY JON BLYTH

OPENOFFICE: An extension of the paperless office, the "O-Pen Office" relies on scratching information into desks with a pair of scissors. **HYPERTRANSPORT:** A vision of how we'd travel in 2005, from a 1984 edition of *Tomorrow's World*. A series of electronic catapults would sling our atoms into a deceleration tumbler, before using 9600 baud modems to communicate us into parallel dimensions. Meanwhile, the traveller's DNA was encoded onto hyperpunchcards, which were faxed to the recipient and used to draw the horizontally-flipped out of the multidimensional ether. Research was stopped as every bit of the science was complete bullshit. **BOOT LOADER:** A contraction of the phrase "Boo To J-L's Odour". Coined after an athletic dance move caused her to trump with her big bum.

HOW TO...

ADD XP TO A VISTA MACHINE

Need:

Vista PC, original Vista disc,
original XP SP2 disc

Time:

2 hours, maybe less

Difficulty level:

Phil Wand

Deep Blue

Medium doofus

Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

REMEMBER:

Make sure you've backed up all your files before installing or reconfiguring the operating system. If you screw up, you stand to lose all the data you have. If that doesn't scare you, what the hell! Throw it in a bath or something.



XP SP2 is an abbreviation of Windows XP with Service Pack 2. You should use an SP2 CD for all installations, as without it XP is unlikely to recognise modern storage controllers and thus won't be able to see your hard drive.

A partition is just an area of your hard drive dedicated to a particular purpose and is accessed as a single unit by the operating system. These are typically accessed through a drive letter. While you can install more than one operating systems in the same partition, don't. There are 1,024 megabytes (MB) in every gigabyte (GB), so if you want to convert from GB to MB you multiply by 1,024. To convert from MB to GB divide.

NeoSmart EasyBCD is one of the better utilities that help Vista users tweaking their boot loader settings and is essential when dual booting with XP.

Want XP on your new Vista PC, but don't fancy the hassle of reformatting? Phil Wand shows you a better way

BUGGED BY THE fact you've upgraded to Vista, and have found that the software you've got no longer works or behaves erratically?

Yeah, me too. While you could get annoyed at the fact publishers are charging people money for upgrades and patches you wouldn't have needed had you stuck with XP, the best thing to do is stick with Vista and install XP. Get it right and you'll be hopping happily between the two Windows without a care in the world.

The first thing you need to do is work out how much room you need, and that depends on what you're planning to do with it. On its own, XP eats about 1.5GB of your hard drive, so the minimum space you need is 2GB – enough for the operating system, plus a small amount of data.

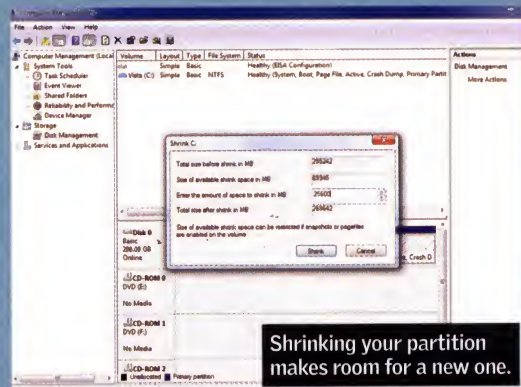
If you're looking to play all the games you put in the loft because they refused to work under Vista, as a rule of thumb you should add 2GB for every CD-based title and 1GB for those on DVD.

01 Making room for an old friend

Open the Start Menu on your Vista machine, right-click the Computer entry and choose Manage from the pop-up menu.

Now click the Disk Management node under Storage on the left, right-click the drive icon where you want to install XP and choose Properties. Name the drive 'Vista' so you know which one not to delete and click OK. Now right-click again and this time choose Shrink Volume.

The amount you're prompted to enter is the amount the drive will be shrunk by, meaning it's the space you'll have left over for XP. So if you want to create a 25GB partition for XP, enter 25600 in the box (25,600MB = 25GB) and click Shrink.

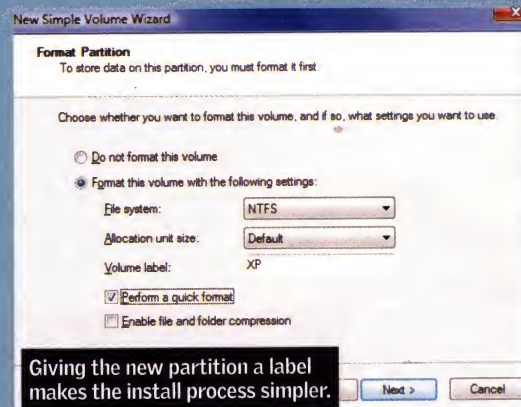


02 It's all in the preparation

Once your drive has been shrunk successfully, you should see a new unallocated area appear in the lower pane.

Right-click on the block and choose New Basic Partition from the pop-up menu. Accept the default values in the Wizard that appears, but when prompted for a label enter 'XP' and tick the Quick Format checkbox.

This step isn't strictly necessary – Windows Setup has no problem installing on unallocated space – but by providing a drive label you're a lot less likely to make the classic mistake of targeting the wrong partition. Doing this would wipe the Vista installation. While there are plenty of warnings before formatting begins, people do make this mistake.



03 Install XP SP2

Fetch your dog-eared XP box, put the installation disk into your optical drive and reboot your PC, making sure you boot from the XP disk rather than from Vista. *Windows Setup* will now run.

Once you've hit Enter to begin the XP installation, you'll be presented with a list of hard drive partitions – one of which will be labelled as 'Vista', one as 'XP' (the

former identified by Step 1, the latter by step 2). Highlight the XP entry in the list and press Enter to choose it as the target partition.

Setup will begin copying files, and after a short while will launch the familiar graphical portion of the process where you'll be asked to configure various aspects of the install.

Windows XP Professional Setup

Welcome to Setup.

This portion of the Setup program prepares Microsoft(R) Windows(R) XP to run on your computer.

- To set up Windows XP now, press ENTER.
- To repair a Windows XP installation using Recovery Console, press R.
- To quit Setup without installing Windows XP, press F3.

Giving the partition a label makes the install process clearer.

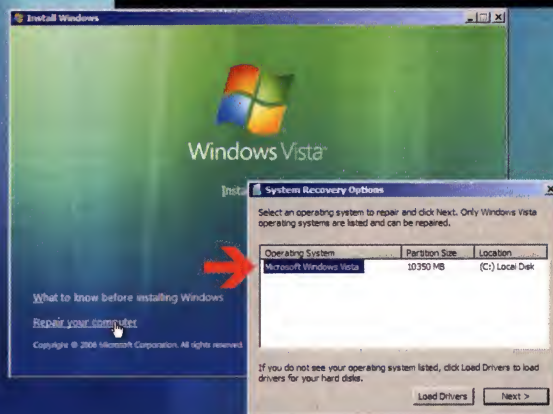
04 Restore Vista

Once the installation has completed and you've finished reminiscing over the familiar look and feel of XP, you'll no doubt be shocked to find there's no option to start Vista when you reboot. And while you can still see all your files in *Windows Explorer*, there's no way to load anything but the older operating system because XP has overwritten Vista's boot loader. Don't panic.

To fix this, insert your Vista installation disc and boot from it. When the initial setup screen appears, click Next and then choose Repair in the lower-left.

Highlight Vista's entry in the System Recovery Options list, click Next, and then choose the Startup Repair option.

Reawaken Vista by choosing Repair during setup.

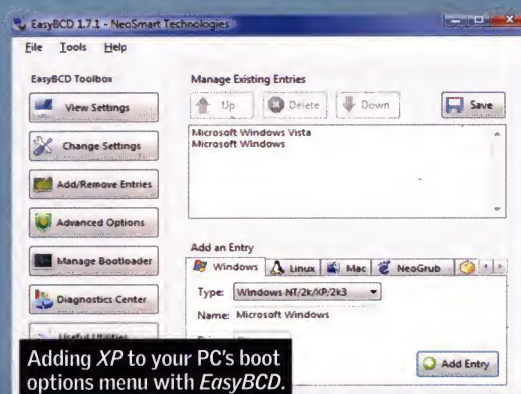


05 The boot menu

Now when you restart, Vista will load correctly – but annoyingly there's now no option to choose XP. What you need to do is update the PC's boot configuration file so that when the machine starts you're presented with a menu which allows you to choose which operating system to load.

Download *EasyBCD* from www.neosmart.net, install and then run it. Click the Add/Remove Entries button on the left, choose the drive letter associated with your XP partition and *Windows NT/2k/XP/2k3* in the drop-down menu. Hit the Add button and then Save.

Reboot and you can now choose between both XP and Vista.



Adding XP to your PC's boot options menu with EasyBCD.

A WARNING ABOUT XP

Once you've created your new partition and have installed XP, be sure to remember that each time you install new software you choose the drive letter associated with XP and not with Vista. For most users that means choosing D: as the target drive for new software – if you choose C: by mistake, whatever you're installing will end up on the original Vista partition instead. Remember to keep things separate, as it makes backups easier and you'll have an easier untangling problems should the need ever arise.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Q Vista Repair doesn't work and it keeps loading XP.

A There's a small chance the Startup Repair option within Vista Repair won't work. In which case, you'll need to choose Command Prompt instead and type: `bootrec /fixmbr`
`bootrec /fixboot`
This should solve the problem.

Q Can't I make XP use drive C: instead?

A No.

Q How do I put everything back the way it was?

A Run *EasyBCD* and remove the *Windows XP* entry.

Return to Disk Management, right-click on the partition you created and choose Delete Volume. Right-click the Vista partition and choose Extend to reclaim the space.

Q How can I make XP's partition larger?

A Boot Vista, open the Management console, and right-click on the XP partition under the Storage node. Extend the partition as you did in Step 1.



DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them, you know... Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite green-flavoured Pringles? Been playing WOW so long your partner's left you? We can't help with those (no, not even the Mighty Wandy), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much info as you can and system specs where applicable.



BioShock needs a kick-ass graphics card and PSU.

DRIVER WATCH

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 710	11 OCT 07
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 162.18	26 JULY 07

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
CREATIVE	X-FI 2.09.0007	30 OCT 06
CREATIVE	X-FI FOR VISTA	30 MAY 07
CREATIVE	2.15.000	
CREATIVE	AUDIGY, AUDIGY 2	9 OCT 06
CREATIVE	AUDIGY 4 2.09.0016	
CREATIVE	AUDIGY FOR VISTA	16 MAR 07
CREATIVE	2.12.0002	

IT'S THE BUSINESS

Q Last month you suggested a reader buy a Dell laptop with *Vista Business* installed, but warned that they wouldn't be getting any games.

Not so! There's a real easy way to add them. Simply open the Programs and Features control panel, click the 'Turn Windows features on or off' link on the left panel, then expand the Games node. You'll see that *Vista Business* does indeed have no games selected, but you simply need to check the ones you want to appear, and complete the process by pressing the OK. Hey presto, *Windows* installs them!

Andrew Harding-Smith

A Thanks for the tip. I'm pretty certain that employers all around the world will be delighted with the knowledge that any *Vista Business* user supposedly at work in a busy office can easily add back any missing games and spend the afternoon baking cakes in Purple Place.

STEAM CHEST

Q My two brothers and I all use *Steam*. The problem is that whenever there's an update, and there are updates every day now, the broadband line gets overcome trying to update all the PCs. Is there any way to store the games centrally, and have the other machines use that one place instead of us all getting the same updates to apply to the same games?

When a new game is released, it puts us perilously close to our ISP's download limit! I've searched the *Steam* forums and the official answer is that you simply can't do it. I've tried creating a shortcut *SteamApps* directory but *Steam* doesn't want to recognise it. Any thoughts?

Fran Buth



A If you're using *Windows 2000* or earlier, you can't have your *SteamApps* directory anywhere but your *Steam* folder without mucking about with undocumented features or third-party tools. This is despite many households now having multiple *Steam* users and the huge GCF game files taking an age to download when more than two people use one phone line.

In *Vista* you can use what are known as symbolic links. A symlink is more than a shortcut in that applications which read or write to it will behave as though working with the actual file or folder, even though it isn't actually there.

In your case, you could use a network-attached storage (NAS) device or a folder on your PC to store everyone's games. You then need to share that folder and have everyone else create a symlink to it.

To do this, right-click your *SteamApps* folder, click *Share*, and choose *Everyone* from the drop-down list. Now go to the other PCs in turn and look in their network

icons for the shared folder, right-click it, choose *Map Network Drive* and assign a letter such as 'S' for 'Steam'. Finally, log them all out of *Steam*, browse to their install directories and rename any existing *SteamApps* folder to *SteamApps.old*.

Now for the tricky part. Click *Start*, type *cmd*, and press *Ctrl+Shift+Enter* for a command prompt with admin privileges. Change directory to their *Steam* folder and type "*mklink /d SteamApps S:*". A new linked directory will appear, and when you restart *Steam*, it'll use the shared folder as its repository rather than local files. Assuming you each have unique *Steam* user names, and as long as you yourself keep *Steam* open and updated, nobody else will need to do the same. While this method is considerably slower, it will mean you only need to get *Steam* updates once.

Those using *Windows 2000* or later, should search for Mark Russinovich's *Junction* which helps hack the same job.

BIOSHOCK SHOCK

Q I recently had problems playing *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* in that when certain graphics settings were used it would crash my Athlon 64 X2 4800+ system. I bought *BioShock* thinking as it was a new game and would be fine, but the same thing happened.

I thought my card was overheating. So I bought a GeForce 8800GTS which appeared to solve the problem, leaving me able to run my games on full settings with no problems and no lock-ups.

```
C:\>mklink
Creates a symbolic link.

MKLINK [/D] [/H] [/J] Link Target

/D      Creates a directory symbolic link. Default is a file
         symbolic link.
/H      Creates a hard link instead of a symbolic link.
/J      Creates a Directory Junction.
Link    specifies the new symbolic link name.
Target  specifies the path (relative or absolute) that the new link
         refers to.

C:\>
```

Make proper shortcuts in *Vista* with *mklink*.

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

Microsoft are now so wrapped up creating introverted fantasies, pointless features and stupid ideas that they've lost touch with what customers actually want

Wandy isn't fond of Microsoft's latest OS or *Office* suite

However, it's recently started doing it again, and I've had to lower detail settings to make it work. It can't be the card this time, can it? My whole system isn't stable at the moment. I've performed a complete reinstall of *Windows* and that seemed to help for a bit.

I managed to coax an error message which said "The NV4_display driver has stopped working normally". The Microsoft site says this is due to a lack of hard drive space, but I have 17GB spare.

Andy Morris

A *My initial thought is that anyone dropping a current high-end video card into a PC that's probably getting on for a couple of years old is going to be stretching the capabilities of their power supply. The GTS you've just bought could really do with a 420W or larger PSU with 26A or more on the 12V rail. Any less than that and you'll start to experience odd behaviour and crashes.*

If you have a supply that's man enough for the job, I'd double-check you did a clean install of the drivers – in simpler terms, that you've properly removed the existing ones – and that you keep a close eye on the temperatures inside your case. Heat build

up is a likely culprit for lock-ups that occur after a certain period of time, and especially when you're running at higher detail levels than usual.

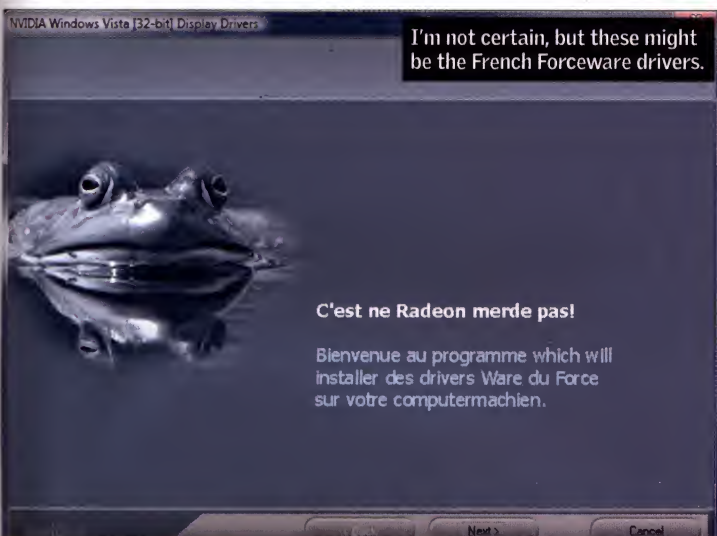
IS BIGGER BETTER?

Q I was going to update my graphics drivers from the DVD on the *PC ZONE* Christmas issue but noted from the NVIDIA site that the version was the American one. This is a significantly smaller file than the UK English download. Can you please tell me why they are different, and which one I should use?

Jim Cowley

A The UK English download (approx. 56MB) is the International version. That means foreign language text not just for the installers but also for the driver panels, help files, and more besides. The US English download (approx. 30MB) contains no extra languages, and that's why it's almost half the size.

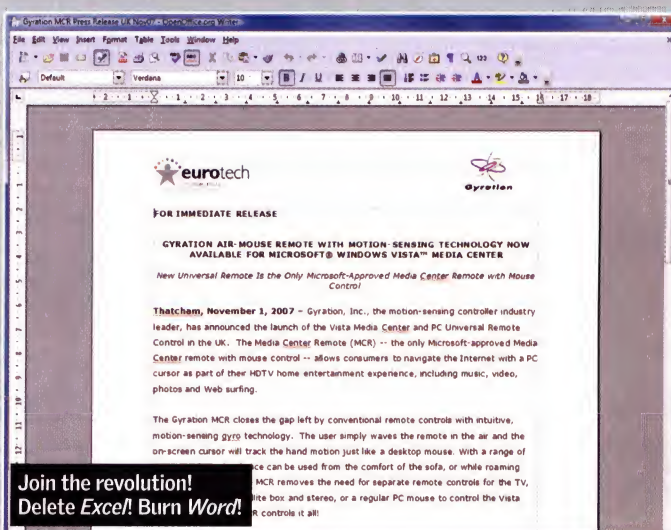
Those of you who don't mind seeing the odd 'z' where you'd expect an 's' should be happy with the US version as it's otherwise indistinguishable. It saves bandwidth and thus the planet, ozone layer and several protected species of mould. **POW**



FORUMS:
DIRECT FROM
DEARWANDY.COM

(mr_shoe_uk) Vista's welcome screen says I have an Intel Core 2 Duo E6550 running at 2.33GHz. It's factory clocked to 2.9GHz. Can't Vista see the overclocking? (Wandy) Vista's Welcome screen shows the factory clock speed. You need to click the Show More Details button in the top-right for the true speed to be shown. (ataribaby0) I've been unable to play *BF1942* online. No servers show up on the game's browser and external browsers such as GameSpy and All-Seeing Eye don't work either. (Wandy) Right-click on your *BF* executable, click Properties, the Compatibility tab, and choose to run as XP SP2. And run the game as an Administrator.

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



32 OPENOFFICE

COSTS FREE FROM www.openoffice.org

Want to know why Jaguar is in a mess? Simple. Their cars are either boring or ugly, or boring and ugly. Concept drawings of the gorgeous C-XF prototype suggested they'd figured out what the problem was, but the final design – the one you can actually buy – has a hint of Chinese knock-off about it, and the moment I clapped eyes on it I knew Jaguar were history.

I have the same feeling when using *Vista* and *Office 2007*. Here are two products so objectively naff that I can't help but wonder if Microsoft have done a Jaguar, and are now so wrapped up creating introverted fantasies overwrought with pointless features and stupid ideas that they've lost touch with what customers

actually want. As with *Vista*, *Office 2007* now requires double the number of clicks to do the simplest tasks, and pretty much everything has been moved from where you expect it to be to where you don't. In addition, you need precisely four of the eight trillion or so features that consume your hard drive and slow the interface to a crawl.

The fact you have to pay hundreds of pounds for the privilege of using something that helps you achieve less than the previous version is enough to drive millions to use *OpenOffice*, a free suite of office clones comprising of a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation tool, flowchart creator and database.

Not only does it work flawlessly, but it's continually updated, and works with its fat cousin.



Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Or has a company done something so great you want to nominate them for a 'Saints Not Sinners' mention? Email Richard at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to him at the address above. Remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

"Not only do I get rubbish goods but it's implied I am trying to con them!"

WATCHDOG



Richard Cosgrove fights the good fight. And wins! Usually!

ECLIPSE COMPUTERS THE ACCUSED: Eclipse

THE PROBLEM: P&P overcharge

Julian Vicari ordered an eCute ATX case from Eclipse Computers recently, and took the company's offer of delivery by Amtrak courier, at the cost of £8.95.

Unfortunately, Julian's case arrived a day late and by Parcelforce 24. Eclipse had originally offered Julian Parcelforce 24 delivery for £8.00. He'd declined this option in favour of Amtrak, because he says it takes two days to receive parcels using Royal Mail's next-day courier service.

When the case arrived, a day later than expected, Julian was a bit miffed. "Not only did they send the item using the service I did not want, they have made an extra 95p at my expense. Plus I have got the item a day late and wasted a day off work."

PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: No problem is too small for Watchdog to investigate, so we contacted Eclipse on Mr Vicari's behalf.

Mr Jonathan Brook informed us that Eclipse uses two courier services because "one charges on a box basis and the other charges on a weight basis. This allows us to be flexible and offer the customer a suitable option depending on their order."

Julian's order came in too late to meet Amtrak's pick-up time, so instead of delaying delivery for a day, his case was sent by Parcelforce 24. Mr Brook told Watchdog this was done so the case would arrive the day Julian was expecting it. But, understandably, they're unable to control precisely when Parcelforce will deliver orders to customers.

In any case, Eclipse have promised to reimburse Julian for the extra 95p. Hooray! Also they will be providing order tracking on their website in the near future.

FINAL VERDICT: Refund granted, tracking to be sorted.

NOVATECH THE ACCUSED: Novatech

THE PROBLEM: Rusty PSU

Julian Vicari (yes, the same chap) emailed us again, this time about Cosham-based low-cost PC component supplier Novatech.

This time Vicari ordered a power supply unit, CPU and hard drive from Novatech for a PC he was building. The CPU and HDD arrived in good condition, but when he checked the PSU he was shocked to find it was "scratched and rusty!!"



Vicari contacted Novatech, who apologised and sent out a new PSU. But that wasn't any good either: "I opened the PSU box and yet again it was covered in scratches. I simply could not believe it."

But the problems didn't stop there. The Novatech representative told Julian that "they had checked all the PSUs and they were all fine and come in bubble wrap." She asked me about the two I'd received, which had just come in a retail box in a plastic bag, not bubble wrap. She said this was strange, as all the others were in bubble wrapped. Her tone suggested she did not believe me and I felt she was implying I was trying to do something dishonest.

"I am really annoyed about this. Not only do I get rubbish goods but it's implied I am trying to con them!"

Vicari cancelled his order and requested a refund, which he was promised.

PC ZONE INVESTIGATION: After we contacted Novatech, the company ran its own investigation. Elaine Giles, Novatech's after sales manager, told us that some PSUs were models that the company no longer stocked and had previously been returned to their manufacturer. It seems the manufacturer had bagged the PSUs

and placed them in retail boxes and accidentally sent them back to Novatech. "Although the power supplies were clearly not new stock, they were in new boxes and the only difference was the internal packaging, which is why the units were not detected in our warehouse."

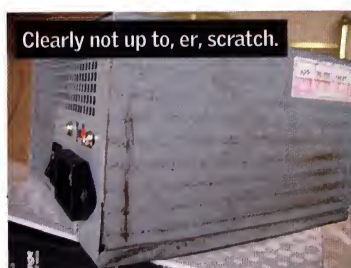
"We did check the stock from the relevant batch of power supplies and found that they were brand new units, but when we despatched the replacement unit to Mr Vicari, it was sent from another batch and sadly he received another used unit."

"At no time did we doubt what our customer was telling us and we would doubt that anyone would go to such lengths to gain the cost of a power supply."

"We have of course apologised for this catalogue of errors and collected the power supplies from the customer. Mr Vicari requested a full refund which we have processed for him and we were more than happy send a replacement free of charge."

FINAL VERDICT: Cock-up resolved.

Watchdog is not a replacement for legal advice. To speak to a consumer rights professional, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.



SAINTS NOT SINNERS

While Watchdog is here to protect your rights from companies that don't play fair, we want to know when a company gets things right too.

This time round it's Dreamcatcher Interactive's turn. Howard Angel told us that he downloaded the *Painkiller Overdose* demo, only to find it didn't

work. He emailed Dreamcatcher and "in less than an hour I was playing the new game!"

Angel said when *BioShock* failed to run in his PC he emailed 2K, who took a month to reply - by which time he'd sold the game.

So congrats to Dreamcatcher for showing the big boys how to behave.

REMEMBER:**SNOW IS NOT
GOOD FOR
COMPUTERS**

Even if your ultra-fast powerhouse gaming PC creates enough heat to cook enough gruel to feed a large orphanage, don't try to cool it by putting it in snow. Snow is water. Water and PCs don't mix.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

We see plenty of new gear at **PC ZONE**, but these are the bits we just adore

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

8800 GTX

EXPECT TO PAY £370

MANUFACTURER XFX

WEBSITE xfxforce.co.uk

AMD have arrived! And the Radeon they brought along is nice enough, but it's neither faster or slower than the 8800 GTS, so our favourite GTX keeps hogging the top spot. Yes, we could have put the Ultra here, but it's over £500 and not much faster. Even we're not that stupid.



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 EXTREME X6800

EXPECT TO PAY

£630

MAN

WEB intel.co.uk

Faster than its predecessor and any Athlon FX, Intel's new 2.93GHz Extreme CPU has 1066MHz FSB, 4MB cache, and LGA775 packaging. With a shorter pipeline, unique Smart Memory Access and Advanced Smart Cache technologies, it has people wondering what AMD can do to catch up.

MOTHERBOARD



D975XBX2

EXPECT TO PAY

£155

MANUFACTURER

Intel

WEB intel.co.uk

Everything that was good about our long-term favourite D975XBX, only with a thick coating of overclocking goodness. Intel's flagship desktop product represents all that's good about the company's products: solid, reliable, no-nonsense and fast. Saddle up with a Core 2 Duo and away you go!

HDD



RAPTOR 150GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£149

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEB www.wdc.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. It's also now double the size, meaning you now need just one of them in your rig. But two in RAID-0 configuration will give you oodles of space and make *Battlefield 2* really fly.

SCREEN



SM226BW

EXPECT TO PAY

£219

MANUFACTURER

Samsung

WEBSITE samsung.com/uk

The Samsung SM226BW is handsome and fast – just 2ms grey to grey – and has no hint of the motion sickness that plagued LCDs a few years ago. It produces a bright, evenly lit image that's full of reverberant colours, sharp edges and dark blacks, making it ideal for any kind of game.

SOUND CARD



SOUND BLASTER X- FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£130

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top-quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still ultra pricey.

SPEAKERS



Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£195

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

The price has just dropped below £200 and these speakers are simply the best we've ever tested. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

GeForce 8800GT

EXPECT TO PAY £142

MANUFACTURER XFX

WEBSITE XGXforce.com

Ladies and gentlemen, the card of the moment. While we've yet to put a retail GeForce 8800 GT against its Radeon opponents, reference benchmarks have shown that the NVIDIA box is the one to buy. Just avoid those fussier model variants that sail close to £200.



PROCESSOR



CORE 2 DUO E6300

EXPECT TO PAY

£105

MANUFACTURER

Intel

WEBSITE intel.co.uk

The 1.86GHz Conroe E6300 might be a stripped-down version of its peers, but don't sneer: it clocks up like nothing else. A smaller die and lower temperatures mean that, with the right board and the right settings, it delivers amazing speed for the money. A great entry-level buy.

MOTHERBOARD



CONROEXFIRE- ESATA2

EXPECT TO PAY

£60

MANUFACTURER

ASRock

WEB asrock.com

Paired with an E6300, this ASRock board can help you wring high-end performance from a budget rig. It features a 1066/800/533 MHz FSB, SATA II with RAID, Vista-friendly 7.1 HD audio onboard, Gigabit LAN and ASRock's easy overclocking features. It even has CrossFire support.

HDD



CAVIAR 1600AAJS SATA-II

EXPECT TO PAY £30

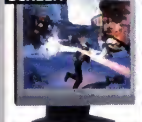
MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.wdc.com

It's not like a 160GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it remains more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, Steam, a couple of thousand music files and the odd porn flick still leaves plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN



VA903M

EXPECT TO PAY

£118

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

The VA903m ousts our favourite VE710s as it's cheaper and has a 19in screen. Plus, it's a better bet than any of the similarly-priced widescreen variants as there are more pixels on the screen: its 1280 x 1024 pixel panel offers greater depth than the 1440 x 900 panel of its VA1912w sibling.

SOUND CARD



SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£20

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS



INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£35

MANUFACTURER

Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

PC GAMER

BRITAIN'S **BEST-SELLING** PC GAMES MAGAZINE

THE HOTTEST GAMES OF THE YEAR!

NEW
ISSUE
ON SALE
NOW!

INCLUDING

FAR CRY 2 > DEUS EX 3 > FM LIVE > SPORE >
EMPIRE TOTAL WAR > STARCRAFT 2
> LEFT 4 DEAD > GUILD WARS 2 > WRATH OF
THE LICH KING > DRAGON AGE > FEAR 2
> FALLOUT 3 > WARHAMMER ONLINE
> AND MANY MORE



WIN A YEAR'S FREE SUBSCRIPTION!

HOW TO WIN

To enter the draw for a free subscription to **PC Gamer** magazine simply text **87103** within the dates specified below with **PCGFREE1** followed by your date of birth. Alternatively send your name, address, mobile number, date of birth and the magazine name with issue number to **Subs Draw, Future Publishing, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.**



**SPECIAL
SUBSCRIBER
EDITIONS**

No cover lines: a gorgeous
exclam-free zone not
available in any shop.

Competition rules and Terms & Conditions

1. Entries must be received between 3rd January 2008 and 30th January 2008.
2. The winner will be selected at random from all entries received between the relevant dates.
3. The 10 winners will be notified within 28 days of the closing date and will need to supply their full address including a UK postcode.
4. Texts will be charged at 25p plus your normal network tariff. Lines are open all day, and you can enter as many times as you like.

5. By entering this competition, you consent to us using your personal details to send you information about products and services of Future Publishing Limited which may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive this information, please include the word "NO" at the end of your text message or in your postal entry.

By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules which are summarised below but can be viewed in full at www.futuretrcs.com. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed

proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Company reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing and any party involved in the competition or their households. By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the Company upon receipt and will not be

returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. If you are a winner, receipt by you of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (amongst other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the Company nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and/or possession of your prize.

**PCZONE**

FREEPLAY



Born free, as free as the wind blows

FREE GAMES!

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

My USA holiday

HI, AND WELCOME to the section in which no-one wants to place an advert. How're you doing? That's nice. Now shut up and let me tell you about my amazing trip to Valve. First, I ran to Seattle, then went up to Gabe Newell. We stared at each other in a way I can only suggest was smouldering, before he said "Hi Log, I loved that book you wrote 94 years ago. Wanna drive around Seattle and flick peanuts at tramps?" I accepted, albeit reluctantly – it did clash with my plans to push Doug Lombardi around in a shopping trolley, but I only had two days in Washington, so I really had to prioritise.

So there we were, me and Gabe, ridin' around in a massive hot air balloon shaped like my head, and suddenly Gabe shouted "Surprise!" and showed me a drawing he'd done of me. He explained, modestly, "I drew it, but everyone else coloured it in". Then he pointed at a bit of felt tip that had gone over the lines, and said "The person who did that is dead now, we all killed him". Then we both laughed – not because it was a joke, but because we both think murdering people is funny.

At the end of the visit everyone said I was the best person in the world, and they gave me this crystal scrying orb that means policeman have to cuddle me if I look sad.

Well, that's how I wish my trip to Valve had gone; as it turned out, everyone had gone home for Thanksgiving. Still, thanks for the free ride in an airplane, and thanks for letting me put my breakfast on the room service. That's how rock and roll I am, baby – free cereal all night long!

Jon Blyth

Jon Blyth, staff writer



108 Demo pages

Behold, the games we gave to you while you weren't looking



110 News

Put this in your pipe and smoke it – it's 720 per cent news



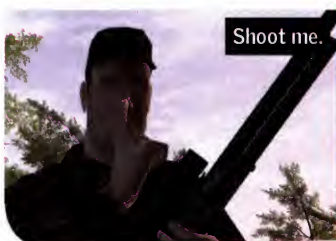
112 Freeware

Hogarty's eye is never beadier than when he's squinting at free games



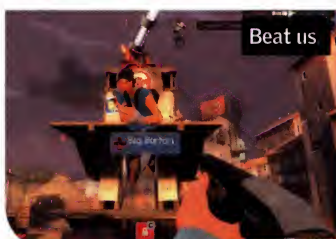
114 Portal Maps

Ed Zitron does a tiny round-up of the best and worst Portal maps



116 Jackass

The pages in which we often like to point at corpses



118 Online Zone

Is it still 'new media'? It's been around for years now

**PCZONE
FREE-O-METER****0**
HOURS

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month

**297**
HOURS*

Demos

Ed Zitron shows off his shiny round thing



EMPIRE EARTH III

"Welcome to Earf" www.empireearth.com

JUST FOR THE record, this game has nothing to do with *Independence Day*, nor the star of *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. No, in fact, *Empire Earth III* is yet another RTS, but turns it all on its head by letting you occupy other people's lands using anything from phalanxes to robots, in the most hostile of manners. Isn't that every man's dream? It certainly was mine before joining *ZONE*. Now I have conquered Will's desk. You're next, Hogarty.

Potential megalomaniacs out there can use this demo to live out their fantasies of world domination, with a mode specifically made for that purpose, allowing you to go all *C&C* on your opponent's arses, or simulate it like in *Total War*. This demo lets you play around a fair bit in the World Domination mode, and even teaches you how to play it, which is nice for those of you who have never played any strategy games.

And it's a chortle and a laugh to blow up things in this demo, and you can guarantee you'll at the very least guffaw at the atrocious voice acting by someone who has never been to York, let alone New York.

OD. ALL PROVINCES IN WORLD DOMINATION ARE DESIGNATED TO ONE OF FOUR TYPES: MILITARY, COMMERCE, RESEARCH. OUR PROVINCE HAS ALREADY BEEN ASSIGNED AS A MILITARY TYPE, WHICH IS USED TO MUSTER TROOPS.



Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover disc support. Or email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



MAKE HAY, NOT WAR

Cerys Matthews was considered as a lead producer on *Empire Earth III*, until she made the disastrous faux pas of suggesting that Wales be made a superpower, and so was exiled to a rainforest with a group of Z-list celebs.



BOOM LIKE IT'S NEVER BEEN DONE

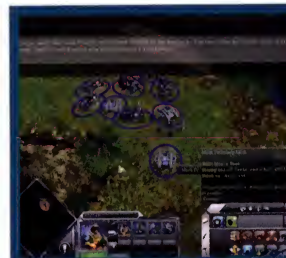
If you insist, you can even blow up things. There's nothing funny about it, though. Really. Ever been blown up? Didn't think so. How would you feel if you got blown up? None too happy I'd reckon.



EMPIRE GIRTH You'll never fit into a size three, Godzilla

FUTURE-TECH

Our favourite feature of *Empire Earth III* is that it gives you the ability to pit robots against cavemen. It's like holding a child back as you steal their lunch money while giving them Chinese burns. In fact, let's make a game about that.



MARCHING, UP HILL, THROUGH THE RAIN

Many people will be scared of *Empire Earth III* as it returns to base building through resource hogging. Our older readers (those 65 and over) will vaguely remember games that used to do this.



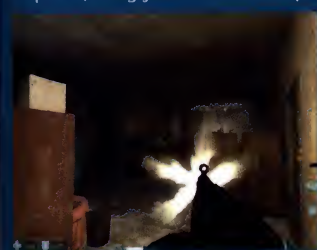
F.E.A.R.: PERSEUS MANDATE

Werewolf bar mitzvah, spooky, scary...

www.whatisfear.com

YOU WAKE UP on the ground, with your good friend Chen waiting to take you out for a night on the tiles – the same tiles, over and over again – as you battle against the forces of evil.

They're always there, pooing in your laundry, using your toothbrush, pissing on the toilet seat. It's about time you put a stop to it, using your slow-motion powers and your ability to



shoot things, and face off against the worst of your fears: a little girl in a red dress. Holy Freud, Batman. Or you would if the guys behind these expansions were still allowed to feature F.E.A.R.'s spooky child.

Perverts and bombs

The modern soldier has many toys to play with



MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK

Hello, 1999? How are you? One of our games borrowed your film cliché, but we'll have it back by tomorrow. Thanks!



SWEARY MARY

Chen swears a lot during the demo. He effs, he blinds, and he certainly says the 's'-word. Hope he gets his mouth washed out – with bullets.

LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE

Blah blah hobbit blah gau blah ring/bum joke blah blah www.lotro.com

DO YOU LIKE adventure? Do you like fighting? Do you like bearded ladies? Then you'll love *Lord of the Rings Online*! We've got you (because we love you) a week's free trial of Turbine's Tolkien MMO, and you can forget all about your loved ones, animals and friends forever! Who needs

them? Not you! That's what MMO gaming is all about. Forget your lives, forget those you know, forget everything! Remember; every time you choose not to log into LOTRO, the good Lord creates another Lily Allen clone. Do you really want that on your conscience?



1 By far the best thing that you can do in LOTRO is make a band, who can play any hit you want. Backstreet Boys? Sure! Radiohead? Of course! Kate Nash? No.

2 Cuthbert (stage-name as Cuthpaste) played the horn, and was widely known as the ladies' man of the group, regardless of the fact that he's a eunuch.

3 Nuge makes up for his lack of height with skill at plucking. He and the band soon became a Middle-earth sensation, with hits like *Dwarfenstein*.

Bugs and gobs

Visit Goblinville with a monster



GET OUT OF MY FACE

You can be a monster in this game and ravage the populous of Middle-earth. Personally, I always choose to work as staff from an airport.



WHO RULES BARTERTOWN?

The latest update brings in Goblin-Town. The goblin's hold is based on Leeds – the hometown of Jamie Sefton, our very own editor.

THE BEST OF THE REST



ALONE IN THE DARK

You kids with your *Resident Evils* and *F.E.A.R.*, you're spoiled. If you want to see what we were all talking about back when we did the Foxtro, watched black-and-white TV in coal-fired living rooms, you should take a look at this game and learn a harsh lesson about scratching scabs. www.centraldark.com



ALPHA PRIME

Trapped on Alpha Prime with not so much as a bucket and a spade to make sand castles with, you are tasked with stopping robots from stealing your hubbardiium (possibly the fossilised excrement of the spiritual leader of diddy Tom Cruise's bonkers religion Scientology™ L. Ron Hubbard?) so that they can sell it on eBay. Twats. www.alpha-prime.com



BLACKSITE

What is it with aliens recently and being a complete pain in the arse? This game shows them being a menace yet again, shooting us with gigantic shockwaves and ruining not just some, but all of our shit. Why would they do this? Why can't they travel all this way just to give us all a warm, friendly, and completely non-erotic, hug? www.blacksitegame.com

FURY FREE TRIAL

www.unleashthefury.com/freetrial



It's not as hot as it hopes it would be, but for nothing, gratis, and zip, you can play 15 days of this attractive UT-style-faux-MMO with all of your friends. It's easy to match up with people, and you'll certainly get some joy out of it. So go on, give it a go.

CEASE FIRE DEMO

www.gamershell.com/download_22001.shtml



Someone, somewhere, wants this game: a 2D WWII fighting game in which you take part in a secret tournament. Why? Why not! It looks like something out of David Lynch's scrapbook, and it's worth playing just to say you have.



SNIPPETS



FREE FOR FOREIGNERS

It's gone beyond a "growing trend" into being "the way things seem to be" – Americans can now have *Psychonauts* for free, through ad-sponsored play at GameTap.

Will the UK ever pick up this oh-so-sexy baton, and stop making us pay for all these brilliant games? It really is enough to make you hate other countries.



BIOSHOCK GETS BIGGER

Just when you thought you could forget about the sodden shinanigans of *BioShock*, 2K release new content. The patch lets you play in proper widescreen, not the cropped 4:3 version you've been using without knowing it. And it gives you a set of new plasmids, of which Sonic Boom looks the best. We're not sure whether this will make you want to replay the whole game, but it's worth a curious rummage. The patch can be downloaded from www.2kgames.com/cultofrapture

CITY 7: TORONTO CONFLICT

Toronto overrun by Combine, landmarks intact

www.torontoconflict.com



THIS IS AN interesting project; translate Canada's largest city into a *Half-Life 2* level, over-run with Combine and drop the odd supplies box on top of a massive crate. The setup is even quite cool – taking the scene where the toothless cutie Lamarr interferes with the teleportation process as the ideal opportunity to sling you into another occupied territory in America's hat.

And... that's where it stops being quite so much fun. Running around the large square, you'll be immediately accosted by a drop in quality of script, a quick hunt for a crowbar, and a number of invisible walls that'll immediately break your will to carry on. After an explore, you'll probably end up clubbing a Combine soldier, after which you'll be chased around and shot to death. It's amazing how many you can

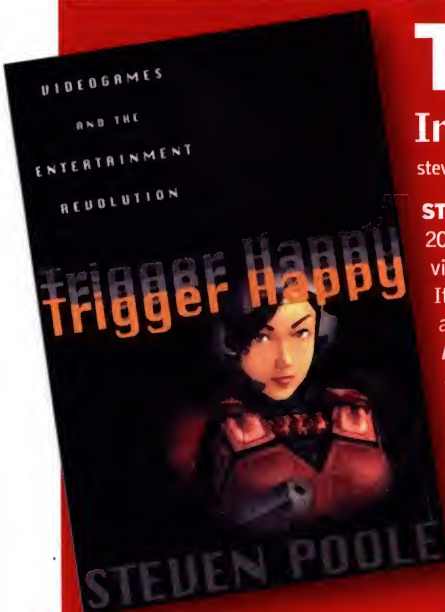
beat off with your crowbar, though, while hiding behind crates.

This is interesting, although mainly in terms of the efforts gone into mapping a town. If you've been to Toronto with a loved one, perhaps you can spend a few moments together pointing out all the places you held hands. You might fall in love all over again. As a game, however, it's mainly a distraction.

TRIGGER HAPPY FOR FREE

Interesting book even more interesting when no pence

stevenpoole.net/blog/trigger-happier



STEVEN POOLE WROTE a book in 2000, which studied the aesthetics of videogames from their origin. It's a book that any retro lover will appreciate – his description of *Defender's* sound effects betray a lot of love for his subject, and over the 428 pages, there's a gamut of trivia that should allow you to instantly seduce whichever gender you prefer into the horizontal canoodling position. Such as the fact that one of the production designers on the *Blade Runner* movie took inspiration from the

side of an arcade cabinet.

Trigger Happy is available without DRM under a Creative Commons Licence, but on Poole's website he states that it isn't going to last forever. However, it's still up at the time of writing, so let's hope he's not forced to take it down.

It's not purely altruistic, of course, and why should it be – Steven Poole has a new book out that you might like to consider buying, if you're of a political bent. Unspeak grinds his analytical gaze onto the loaded language used in everyday politics, and whilst it's not

game-related in any way, it's always good to have what you take to be common sense backed up by an interesting, eloquent and well-informed writer. The fact that he loves videogames just makes us that little bit fonder of him, that's all.

Trigger Happy is only a little bit academic, and the writing's big on the pages, so it doesn't take long to zip through it and come out the other side infected with another man's knowledge and love of the whole gaming medium, perhaps, and credit card details ready to buy a hard copy for each of your newly-seduced hareem.

ALAPLAYA PORTAL

Jon Blyth and his embarrassing free games

A FEW MONTHS back, I playtested *Audition*. I tried to be upbeat, but I think my frustration at being whipped by a collection of European pre-teens was fairly evident behind my professional stoicism. *Audition* is just one of the three online multiplayer games that the alaplaya portal currently offers, all free-to-play.

Audition is a pure button-matching game: tap a collection of arrows, then press space. It's just a bit too simple, and hard, to be of anything other than immediate interest, but the other two games – *Fantasy Tennis* and *Come On Baby* – have more gaming beef on offer.

Fantasy Tennis takes the basic tennis video game and adds pick-ups, and super shots – which, for me, featured a panda skateboarding on and watching me hit the ball. Across all the games is a distinctly European style that walks the tightrope between charming and French. *Come On Baby* has its roots firmly set in *Mario Kart*, with drift boost and weapon drops littered around the course, and a mixture of skill and luck that rewards improvement without granting success.

You can join someone else's game or set up your own room, but bear in mind that English isn't necessarily everyone's first language, so don't wade in with a moving and eloquent



chat soliloquy, as you'll probably be met with "que?" and "tais-toi". The world isn't complete yet, and there's the occasional graphical peculiarity – the text in *Come On Baby* seems badly scaled – but overall, the whole thing's got a solid and amusingly translated ("Present Yourself!") appeal about it.

As with most free-to-play games, there's a shop in which you can buy moustaches for your baby and malachite skirts of enhanced lobbing, but if you sign up using www.alaplaya.eu/p/pczone before 31 January, you'll be given a few free points to spend on your characters before you decide whether this world is for you and – more likely – your kids.



SNIPPETS



FIX YOUR OWN GUITAR

snipurl.com/brokeguitar
If your *Guitar Hero* guitar is breaking, along with those of the rest of the strumming world, then if you've got the electronic balls to rip it open and muck about, then this link'll provide you with everything you need to know. It's not ideal, but it'll save you time and money.



KANE & LYNCH MP: NO GOLD

www.logmeinhamachi.com
Kane & Lynch claims to require Gold membership for its online play, marking one further step in Microsoft's gameplan of making us pay for what we've always had for free. That is, unless you set up a Hamachi server to host an internet "System Link" LAN game. Follow the link to reclaim your free MP.

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH

TWO WORLDS



Too many people have been opening wardrobes: "Bomb traps have been attached to some wardrobes."

Movie of the month

ALONE IN THE DARK

The king of creepy games is back, and using the latest in crossfades, sweeping cameras and eerie choir music, this film gives absolutely nothing away about the game, but does have a smack of *Silent Hill* about it. Sure, we're looking forward to it, but give us something we can get really excited about, please?

Constant cross-fades – really annoying when you're trying to take screenshots.

Uh-oh – two people on a bench! I bet they're up to no-good. Cuddling on benches indeed.

Zombie house! Zombie house on a hill! Draculas! Godzillas too, I shouldn't wonder.

There, I told you they were wrong 'uns. Covered in blood like it's the done thing.



Freeware



Money money money, must be funny, in *Steve Hogarty's* world

This month, steal everything in sight, run along a suspiciously long train, patrol the skies in a 1983 jet fighter, find your heart, solve a murder mystery in a building full of felt-tip lunatics, ride on a fictional form of transport, and run along a probably fictional form of transport.

TRILBY: ART OF THEFT

The return of the dapper napper Dev: Ben 'Yahtzee' Croshaw | www.fullyramblomatic.com

RELENTLESS CYNIC AND internet celebrity Ben 'Yahtzee' Croshaw, who is best known for hating most games but being hilarious enough to pull it off without people ever noticing he's simply a grumpy bastard (we love him really), was previously known for his indie developer credentials. *Trilby: Art of Theft* is his creation, and sees you, a pinstriped gentleman burglar carrying out heists in a side-scrolling, *Impossible Mission*-style sneak-around-and-steal-'em-up.

You might think it strange that Yahtzee, who has taken endless joy in tearing stealth sections in games to shreds, should base a game entirely around the concept of pressing yourself against walls and moving through shadows like some kind of anti-moth, but *Trilby* carries it off well, and with faultless style. The rules are clearly defined, the graphical style distinct and uncluttered, and the controls are neat, at least initially – they get a bit more complicated as you earn more abilities.

Each heist presents you with a goal, along with a series of optional objectives dotted about the building. Getting to these objectives earns you reputation points, which can be used to buy new



Filing cabinets contain sexy, sexy secrets.

skills, like sidling and rolling, to gain access to previously off-limit rooms. Some of the cooler skills involve sticking to ceilings and all sorts, but they're generally based around improving your ability to remain hidden. Doing this employs a *Thief*-esque light system, in which you are at any time in complete darkness, mid-light, or full-brightness, as indicated by a light bulb in the corner of the screen.

Guards and security cameras will sound alarms if you're spotted. Trigger too many and you'll have to end the heist and start again – but find your way to an electrical panel and you'll be able to cut the power to certain lights and cameras.

In short, not only is Yahtzee an unflinchingly harsh yet charmingly sincere fellow, he also finds the time to make some bloody good games.



On-rails action.

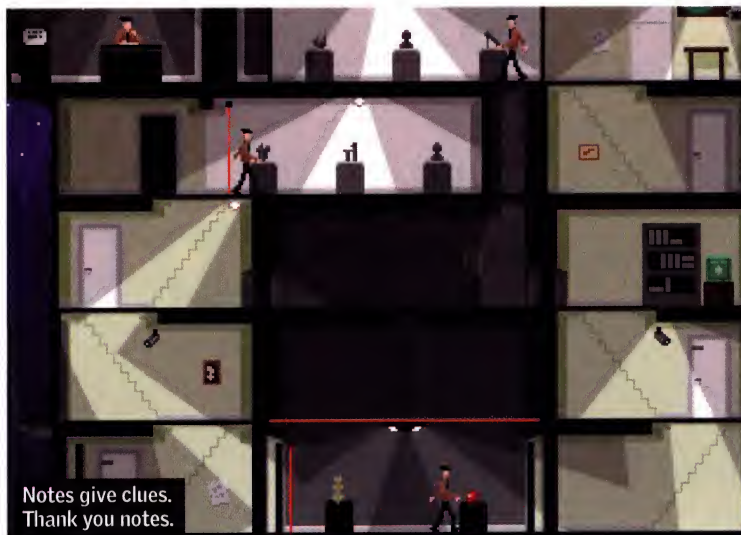
SUNSET RUNNER

Duck, you sucker!

Dev: Guert | www.worldofguert.com

OR TO GIVE it its full title: *Sunset Runner and the Suspiciously Long Train*. In this game you must run along the top of an unnervingly lengthy train as it speeds towards the sunset at an increasingly breakneck pace, demanding more of your dodging skills until the game becomes impossible to play and you die.

This game is a competition entry, whose rules state that the game's resolution must be less than 256 x 256, and abide by the theme of 'unusual aspect ratios'. So that's why it is the way it is. Stop judging it.



Notes give clues. Thank you notes.



Your hide-out doubles as a training area.



PATROL FALCON

Take flight, you know it's right

Dev: Stanio | stanio.extra.hu

ANOTHER RETRO REMAKE? "Steve, you must have a boner for retro games," you surely must be screaming into your magazine right now. And you could be right, because I love, nay lurve remakes of retro games – the more pixelated the better. *Falcon Patrol* came out on god knows what (C64) in god knows what

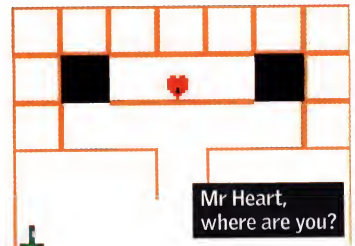
year (1983), but *Patrol Falcon* places you in the cockpit of a side-scrolling jet fighter, which must defend the skies from the nefarious red enemies. With buckets of parallax scrolling, and *Lander*-style landings (for refuelling and such), *Patrol Falcon* is a pleasing and briefly enjoyable freeware remake.

MR HEART LOVES YOU VERY MUCH

No Mr Heart, don't run into that maze!

Dev: Zaphos | snipurl.com/pcz_heart

MR HEART HAS a problem: he loves you *too* much. He loves you so much that he's run inside a maze and become lost. Hopelessly lost! It's up to you to find him through a complex form of maze exploration. It's a 2D maze, with gravity, which you rotate 90 degrees left or right. But it's also a maze in which you can push the tiles around at will. The characters – your tiny avatar and the eponymous heart who loves you very much – are curiously well animated. Your character walks by swinging his legs in a careless way, while Mr Heart longingly emotes as he waits for you. It's part of the same competition



Sunset Runner (left) was part of, which explains its cutesy minuteness. It's impossible to explain how it works, but it's on the DVD. If you think you can explain it in 100 words, email me with your explanation. If I understand it I will send you an eggcup-sized elephant and an Apache gunship we got from Blizzard.

RORSCHACH

Now what do you see here? Dev: Collecting Smiles | www.collectingsmiles.com/rorschach



TWO ELKS DANCING all night. An angry butterfly coming straight at me. Northern Ireland but in reverse. Just a few comedic answers to Hermann Rorschach's inkblot test, apparently one of the most popular methods of psychological evaluation, though it's only ever used on TV. *Rorschach*, the game, is a cleverly made puzzle adventure in which you are an investigator hired to solve a theatrical murder in an asylum.

The victim's had his chest torn open by the looks of it, a fact brilliantly represented, much like the rest of the game, in felt-tip pen – *Rorschach* is a game drawn by hand on plain white paper. Your character flits about the asylum, chatting to the residents and the staff, gathering topics with which to question others. There's a restriction, in that you can only 'hold' four topics at once, meaning you've got to apply strategic thought to your conversations.

The characters are deeply interesting too. A shame the game is over so quickly, but this is the first in a series of episodes, so keep an eye out for future releases.

"Doctor, doctor. I have a strawberry up my bum."

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

OFF THE RAILS



www.nitrome.com/games/offtherails

HANDCARS, THAT'S WHAT they're called. And they clearly don't exist. If they did we'd all be using them. Pushing up and down on those little levers, propelling ourselves along railway tracks – it's eco-friendly, as well as good for the environment! *Off The Rails* perpetuates the falsehood that handcars are real things by featuring a handcar quite heavily. Hammer the keys (I forget which ones) to make the handcar go faster (and faster) while jumping over hazards like pits and rocks. The handcar does flips when it goes over jumps, which is so exciting you might just flip yourself, and if you manage to land back on your wheels you might get bonus points or something. Check out the rest of the games on Nitrome too – they're mostly interesting.

FREEPLAYPLAY!

PORTAL MAPS

Ed Zitron rounds up maps from the *Portal* modding scene. He will not stab you

USING ONE OF the simplest gaming concepts in years, *Portal* has taken the world by storm with its fiendish, charming puzzle action, building on its predecessor *Narbacular Drop* and adding a dollop of story and a spoonful of wry humour. As *PC ZONE*'s adoration for the game knows no bounds, and most of the team are on our 15th playthrough, we decided it was time to take a cursory glance over what the online community has created using the vast Valve SDK for the game.



REN_TEST2

tinyurl.com/25vvvv | Map for: Portal



CREATED BY ONE of Bethesda's *Fallout 3* team, the internet won't shut up about *Ren_Test 2*, one of the most mind-numbingly taxing *Portal* maps ever created. So, take it as read that this map is so bloody brutally challenging that it makes *Portal*'s advanced levels seem effete.

Now that we're done with that, we have to take our hats off to the designers for creating a fiendishly difficult yet fantastically designed map, recycling the ball-cube, and conniving one of the most frustrating and maddening energy-ball puzzles known to man.

This is a bastard of a map which will cause a stress migraine as you to

manipulate energy balls into playing a horrible game of *Portal* lacrosse.

Bethesda's people have made a level that's mind-boggling both in how hard and how masterfully designed it is.

★★★★★



Touch my button.



NEW_PL_CORE

www.portalsmaps.net/maps/new_pl_core.bsp | Map for: Portal

THERE ARE MANY emotions you feel throughout *Portal*; elation, frustration, sadness, but rarely do you feel scared or tense. This map changes all that, by adding just the right amount of energy balls, funny-shaped walls, and no-portal surfaces to make this a tricky, twitchy map that will have you constantly looking over your shoulder.

Due to the erratic nature of where the balls fly, especially once you've decided to place a few portals to energise the switches, you'll be in constant fear of getting yourself energised to death.

Our advice is to play without autosaves, for that real oh-God-I'm-

gonna-die sensation throughout. A tightly made, well-textured and a well-balanced map for players of all skill levels.

★★★★★



You gotta have flex, man.

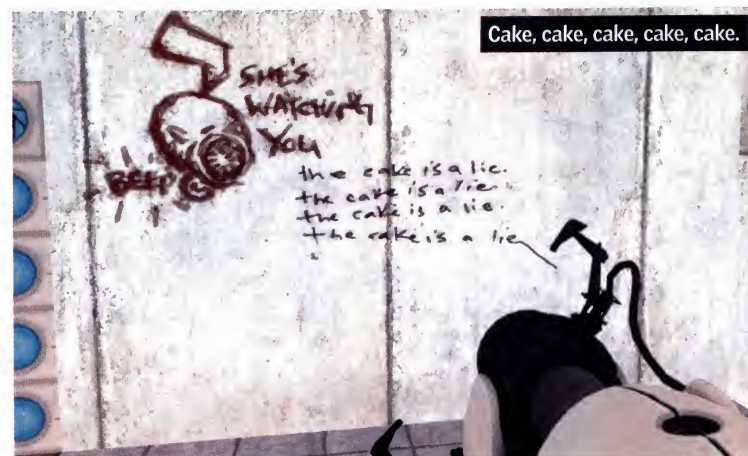
SANTURA

www.portalsmaps.net/maps/santura.zip | Map for: Portal

SANTURA IS A great example of a map with some really solid, fun ideas put into it: made by a true *Portal* fan. It strikes the balance very well between making you think about your surroundings and negotiating the environment to place you in the perfect portalling position.

It didn't take long to break the map, through a misplacement of the Companion Cube, causing a disappointing reload just when I was getting into the swing of things. That weakness aside, *Santura* is a finely made map well worth a download.

★★★★★



Cake, cake, cake, cake, cake.

LOST CHAMBER

www.portalmaps.net/maps/lostchmb_a_00_b01.zip | Map for: Portal

THIS MAP IS another teeth-grinder which has the single most annoying puzzle in here. It requires succinct and careful placement of portals at one part to pass an energy ball around the map – and without the right timing, you're either dead or back to square one.

The kicker is that the walls are a fluorescent bloom-drenched white, making it an absolute chore to

even see the energy ball that you're so trying to drop into its receptacle.

We don't expect meticulous playtesting of a map – after all, this was designed in a fan's spare time – but did this map's maker even play it through? We don't know.

This isn't a bad map, but it suffers from the modder's malady of a lack of spit and polish.

★★★★★



Boxes are your life blood in this map.

THE CUBE WILL STAB YOU

www.portalmaps.net/maps/cg_cubewillstabyou.bsp | Map for: Portal

MUCH LIKE THE *Judge Dredd* movie, cubewillstabyou makes a terrible mistake within minutes of beginning. While *Judge Dredd* broke the rules by showing us Stallone's stupid face beneath the mask, here our Weighted Companion Cube friend, who we love so, breaks the rules wholeheartedly by suddenly talking to us.

To make matters worse, the Cube hurts you, and growls and burbles like a demon baby as you attempt to wrestle it painfully from one side of the level to the other. The level design is bland, repetitive, at many times annoying, and doesn't feel right.

Cube Will Stab You isn't lacking in technical superiority over the other *Portal* maps we've played, but feels uncreative and dull. It breaks the cardinal rules of *Portal*, tries to be witty with its use of the voiceover and the Companion Cube, and falls flat on its face – and no-one's laughing.

★★★★★



Oh, I see. It's a hated Companion Cube.



Controversially, he will stab you.

FREEPLAYPLAY!



The hilarity never, ever ends.

G_CAKE

www.portalmaps.net/maps/G_cake.bsp | Map for: Portal (Well what did you expect? UT3?)

"CAN YOU FIND the Gman and his chocolate cake? Only one way to find out!" squawks the chirpy description of this dire map.

Not only is every texture repeated so often it makes you feel lost and sad, but the arrangement of things is such that you will find yourself either

stuck on one part for a minute before giving up, or spend two minutes to finish it. The result simply leaves you depressed and hollow.

Play this, if only to realise how good life is without games like this in the world.

★★★★★



Who is this map by? We do not know.

TONYMAP

www.portalmaps.net/maps/tonymap.bsp | Map for: Portal

IT'S GOOD TO see a mapmaker with a sense of modesty. Then there's always the mapmaker who sticks his name on a wall mere seconds after you enter.

Luckily for Mr Tony, we're a fan of this one, which is a slice of classic *Portal* action, requiring you to negotiate buttons and really use your portal gun to its full potential to trick yourself through the level.

There are a few iffy choices regarding necessary placement of portals, but ultimately Mr Tony has done well to make his home-made level engaging, and giving it a sense of nostalgia for those of us – we imagine most PC gamers, at this point – who are done with *Portal*.

This is a step back in time to the first few levels, and we love it.

★★★★★

PC ZONE JACKASS

ANIMAL MASSACRE



Steve Hogarty is gonna bag himself some varmints with his friends

ANIMALS. DIRTY STINKING animals. They swan around (especially the swans) pooping on our verdant greens, swimming in our waters, flying in our air – the air that we're trying to breathe. It's disgusting, absolutely repulsive. You can't reason with animals either, as Dr Dolittle says, so we've little choice but to shoot the bastards. It's the only language they understand. So cock your rifles, readers, as we once again fire up our most dearly loved demos of all time: *Deer Hunter 2005*.

LOVELY SEX WOMAN HUNT

THE PREMISE:

Illinois, dawn. The hillbilly hunters (PC ZONE's Ed Zitron and Steve Hogarty) inform Lovely Sex Woman (Will Porter) of the rules of the game. Armed with nothing but her lovely sexy wits, Lovely Sex Woman has 30 seconds to escape into the wilderness on horseback – then the hunt will begin. The prey? Lovely Sex Woman herself.

THE HUNT:

Lovely Sex Woman gallops at speed into the forest, knowing too well that Steve and Ed will soon be tearing after her on their cross-country quad bikes. A shot is fired to indicate that her head start has expired, and the distant revving of

engines quickens Lovely Sex Woman's pace. She heads for the river – the hunters' bikes can't cross water, but Lovely Sex Woman's horse can swim like a dolphin.

"Faster now horsie," Lovely Sex Woman murmurs as the horse wades into the raging water, "they can't be far behind."

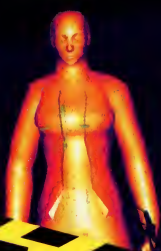
THE KILL:

Ed gets lost, but Steve's natural ability to follow women with an air of menace leads him directly to Lovely Sex Woman. He can't kill her though, as she keeps hiding on the opposite side of a tree and won't stand still no matter how much Steve complains.

VICTOR: LOVELY SEX WOMAN

Scope out that hot chick!

Lovely sex woman



PCZONE PCZONE

A TINY MURDER

THE PREMISE:

Do you know what the most dangerous creature in the world is? It's not a tiger, it's not even a snake. No, it's a mosquito. Mosquitoes kill millions of people every year and no-one's really sure how or why. This is proof that the smaller the animal, the more deadly and rude it is – and as such we must kill squirrels or be killed by squirrels.

THE HUNT:

We try many methods of finding a squirrel to carry out an act of pre-emptive revenge against the bushy tailed bastards: sitting in a tree, sitting in a little camouflaged bunker, sitting on an really tall chair, blowing on a little trumpet that makes a honking noise – nothing seems to work! Just as

we're about to give up and call it a day, Will (reprising his role as a man) spots something flittering in the corner of his eye. Could it be...?

THE KILL:

A squirrel! Will screams across the office, "EVERYBODY GET DOWN! A SQUIRREL," and our little LAN clan of hunters hits the dirt.

Our competitive, manly nature takes hold, and the three of us shuffle around in circles on the ground, searching for the squirrel in order to shoot and kill it first.

A shot rings out. A Will yelps in victory – the squirrel has met his match and lost. We stand around pointing at the dead animal to establish our superiority once and for all.

"Over here! The high chair's over here!"

It looked bigger through my scope.

VICTOR: WILL

Oof. Right in the baby-maker!

SEND US YOURS!

The Deer Hunter 2005 demo is available at tinyurl.com/2cq9aa, so download and play online now. You can devise your own madcap activities, much like we do. Make sure it includes pointing at things, or shushing one another. Take a screenshot, or some video, of what you did and email it to letters@pczone.co.uk. We'll blog the best at www.pczone.co.uk

DEER OH DEER!

THE PREMISE:

We're actually hunting some deer, just like the game wants us to. They're rare, these deer, and the objective is to kill the buck (a boy deer) with the biggest, sexiest antlers of all.

THE HUNT:

Thundering across Illinois on mighty steeds, we scan the landscape with our hawk-like vision. When this fails, we set up camp and wait for the deer to come to us instead. Will sprays Ed with buck scent and sits in a camouflaged hidey-hole. Steve sets up an electronic buck caller that continually goes "yuuurrghhh" ("What's up buck?" in deer language). Does all this madness work?

THE KILL:

Holy balls! Deer everywhere! Falling from the sky! Well, not really, there are two deer approaching Will's encampment, their intentions questionable.

Will gently and carefully takes aim, before an overzealous Steve fires madly into the trees, terrifying the deer and causing them to scamper for their cute little lives.

All the scampering in the world cannot save them from Will and Steve's insane hail of gunfire though, and once the furore dies down, the hunters check for corpses. There is one, a baby deer, with a hole in its shoulder. Will and Steve wave the small pile of venison farewell.

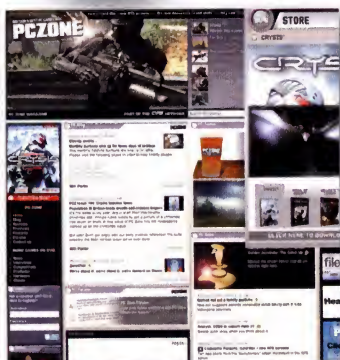
VICTOR: BUCK SCENT

Shhh. It's sleeping. And bleeding.



Online Zone

www.pczone.co.uk



Can't wait for the next **PC ZONE**? Don't panic! Just hit **www.pczone.co.uk** now for up-to-the-minute news, exclusive features, forums, special competitions, pubcasts, Fight Club news, online chats and the **PC ZONE** blog!



NOTES FROM THE FORUM

Our forum-goers are giving us a duty call...

ON THE BLOG

PCZONE 2007

What's been happening on **ZONE's** web diary this month...

THIS MONTH'S BLOGGING

was dominated by the tardy arrival of the fourth, and most populous pubcast yet. Recorded during Suzy's handover period, it's the last recorded incidence of her dulcet, velvety honk echoing around the walls of the Marylebone Hobgoblin. Her replacement, Ed Zitron, who by the time you read this will have completely erased the beautiful mould of her bum from the chair, and replaced them with the dimples from his own mannish cheekbumps, can also be heard. The next pubcast will be out super-quick, by way of apology for the nightmarish running-upstairs-in-treacle-waders unpunctuality of number four.

There's also something about deers, to coincide with this month's Deer Hunter Jackass feature. And by coincidence, I mean appear on the internet, and three weeks later in print. It coincided for us, though, and you honestly can't ask us to take things like readers into account: there are too many of you.

It's the best "all out action" game I've played in a while, just check out the level "Shock and Awe" and tell me you aren't in love.

Liquid_metal

It took me about eight hours to complete on Hard, which is just about spot-on I reckon. And that's eight hours of pure fun, something that I can't say about any FPS since *COD2* (except maybe *Prey*, but that was only six hours, but you get my drift). I have to say, I enjoyed it more than *BioShock* and the bit of *Crysis* I've played so far (which is admittedly not very much).

Maritz

As much fun as it is to shoot foreigners in a bloody fashion, I'm getting a little tired of games that have you stomping through the Middle East. I'm still waiting for a game where you lead a squad of English soldiers through Swansea, killing everything with the slightest taffy accent... Maybe *COD5* will fulfil my fantasy.

SunScramble



Will we ever see *Call of Duty 5: Welsh Insurgency*?

Out of *COD4* and *Crysis*, I have to say I prefer *Crysis*. The thing I like about *Crysis* (and *Far Cry* before that) is the space. Okay, I know you can only go so far but it gives you the illusion of freedom where as I feel a bit claustrophobic in *COD4*. That and the fact it's all a bit hectic and in your face.

Mr_Rossi

Just had a go of the demo - pretty good so far. I don't know what graphics setting it was on, it looked great and I

didn't feel the need to change it. I got confused over some of the objectives, but really, all you gotta do is follow the yellow marker. I died an awful lot, but I never felt too pissed off. I was just glad to get back to the action so quickly.

Apophis_dd

I've played the multiplayer for nearly 200 hours already according to xfire! Loving it. Not even finished the single player yet

Funkyjack



Round 4 now available on the **ZONE** website and iTunes!

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

WIN!

Send us your MMO character screenshots to win stuff...

You already know all about our 'PC ZONE Around The World' bit in Letters, where we ask you to send in your photos of yourself holding your favourite mag all over the globe. Well now, you're cordially invited to send us screenshots of you or your clan in your favourite MMO with a brief, jolly explanation of what you're up to. The best two postcards sent to us every month at **letters@pczone.co.uk** will be printed here and win a PC game. Get snapping...

FIGHT CLUB



And everyone taunt... now!

YET ANOTHER CRACKING Fight Club, helped no end by the quirky northern chunters of Duckers and the droll commentary of JerneyDEagle. As always, the main event was the team photo – this month taken at capture point C on Gravel Pit – with everyone standing atop the tower saluting or playing their axes as if they were a guitars and young Will standing on a nearby shack's roof taking the photo. The resultant chaingun massacre at the hand of Seregrail7 was a joy to behold.

Prior to this, much to-ing, fro-ing and demands for a change in the map had occurred on Well – in which young Ed Z discovered the joy of being a spy while accusations of 'scout rushing' and people being 'turret-building bastards' flew each and every way while he happily backstabbed everyone as they tapped in their vitriolic ribaldry. If you want to join in with the fun on



our servers in Fight Club, or at any other time, then dates and announcements appear on our increasingly gigantic Steam community group: steamcommunity.com/groups/pcz. We'll probably be playing *Call of Duty 4* next time.

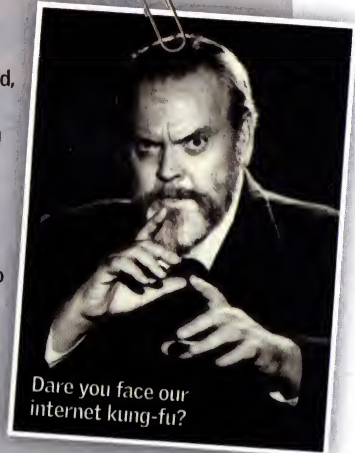


ZONE CHAT



Surlier than Orson Welles at noon, and even harder to understand

LIKE THE DARK nebulous corners of our mind, the Zone Chat is a veritable leviathan of jumbled information, populated by the insane and infirm ne'er-do-wells who both read and write this sordid publication. This month's hit features included G_Man_007 talking smack on... everybody, Ed Zed insulting Will to the point that Will shouted at him, and then someone changing the subject to *Fallout*, grabbing Will's attention like a magpie with ADD.



How to join in!

To be a part of next month's Zone Chat, join our Steam Community group: PC Zone (PCZ). And keep an eye on the forums at www.pczone.com for the date of the next chat event...



Can't make Fight Club?

If you can't make it to Fight Club – maybe you're battling hordes of zombie geese and turkeys, intent on revenge – then join other PCZ readers on the following public servers. Who knows – some of us might even be there. The latest info can be found at www.pczone.co.uk.

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey
Jon Blyth PCZ_Log
Ed Zitron PCZ_edzed

- COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE**
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs.zonegames.co.uk:27025
- HALF-LIFE 2 DEATHMATCH**
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065
- DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE**
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085
- TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC**
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045
- ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS**
pczone2.jolt.co.uk
- PREY**
prey.zonegames.co.uk:27719
- BATTLEFIELD 2142**
bf2142.zonegames.co.uk:16567
- TEAM FORTRESS 2**
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27115
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27125
pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27135

Holiday greetings!

Supermarket vs arachnid.

Here's Archfarchnad, hiding from a spider. Top tip for naming RPG characters – just use a Welsh word. The word "supermarket" is ridiculous, but "Archfarchnad" (Welsh for the same) is amazing.

Archfarchnad
(Pete King)

Wish You Were Here!

Snogging dinosaurs.

After using my mule to run around the auction houses, I like to get her to make out with the pets of any hunters. Here, Olmankyits is snogging a raptor. My real life attitudes to women are much healthier.

Olmankyits
(Harvey Patterson)

Retro ZONE

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

The insect *Jon Blyth* challenges a perfect, immortal machine...

FLASHBACK OF THE MONTH

BUT HOW?

This is definitely illegal. We're not saying do this. We're just giving you a gun, and telling you sweets will fall from the sky if you shoot a kitten.

Should you decide to flout the law and download *System Shock 2*, then make sure to turn off any multiple cores you're running (right-click on the game's entry in the Processes tab of the Task manager, select 'Set Affinity' and uncheck everything but CPU0).

You might also find some issues with the sound and cut-scenes, but they're pretty well documented on that ol' internet.

Links...

- 1 A useful resource for downloading things: the-underdogs.info
- 2 The SHTUP project updates SS2's dated textures: shtup.home.att.net
- 3 Rebirth gives SS2's creatures hi-res 3D models: snipurl.com/ss2rebirth

THERE WAS SOMETHING strange about *BioShock*. As much as it stood out among the year's great games, and in terms of narrative it was a genuine showstopper, it just kind of disappeared. Everyone played it, even more people have blogged about it, and now it's just a happy part of everyone's gaming history. Will people even remember it in ten years, like they do *System Shock 2*?

Once you've got SS2 up and running again (it's a bit tricky, but help's available on da 'net), you'll see that for all the graphical zip-zappery of *BioShock*, atmospherically SS2 is the richer uncle. And with some of the fan-made mods to give you hi-res textures, models and sound, the game becomes a challenger for its descendant. So why is SS2 better?

First, Shodan. No character in *BioShock* comes close to being so iconic. In fact, only GLaDOS from *Portal* has come close since, and even she loses out for overdoing it with the comedy Cher effect.

Sander Cohen's a great creation, but since when did foppish psychopaths beat steel-voiced artificial dominatrices? Sure, Andrew Ryan himself steals the show – but nothing tops being called an insect by a passionless, insane, electronic matriarch.

Far be it from anyone to suggest that *BioShock* was simplified for a 360 release, but... well, we didn't get an inventory. That's what it boils down to,



For all the graphical zip-zappery of *BioShock*, atmospherically *System Shock 2* is richer

2K! We wanted an inventory, and we didn't get one.

You can give us a fully-realised world. You can make that world beautiful. You can give us flexible combat, excellent

scripts and movie-quality acting, but you take our inventories away we will grab your ankles and scream. You can take our inventories. That's where we keep our *stuff*!

NEVER BETTERED

Some reasons why *System Shock 2* is goodest

HACKING
Stick Pipe Mania up your arse. SS2's hacking is simple, tense, and more stats than skill and implant based.

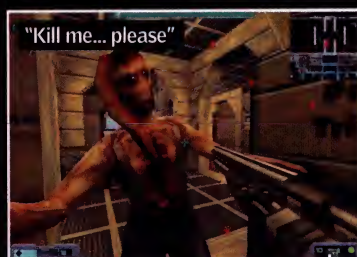
RESURRECTION
BioShock's Vita-Chambers castrated death, but didn't make the Big Daddies any easier to kill.

PSIONIC ABILITIES
Adam: to be fair, it's a catchier name than 'cybernetic modules', but it does the same job.

AMMO
The scarcity of ammo (especially in the harder skill settings) added to both games' tension. One-all.

RESEARCH
Performed with chemistry in *System Shock 2*, and with a steampunk Polaroid-style camera in *BioShock*.

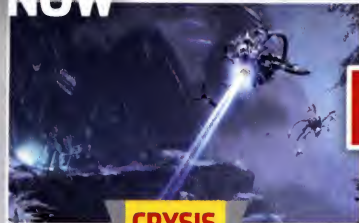
OVERALL
Let's stop the bickering and admit they were both brilliant games, hold hands, and skip away happily.



NOW & THEN

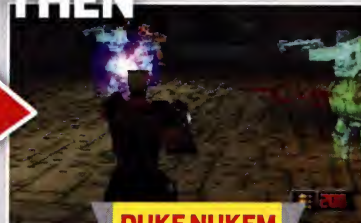
CRYSIS vs DUKE NUKEM 3D

NOW



CRYSIS

THEN



DUKE NUKEM

THERE'S A BASIC rule with freeze guns. Once you've frozen your enemy, you have to be able to shatter them with a melee attack. What's the point otherwise? It's like having a flamethrower without a puddle of oil, a pistol without an exploding barrel. If you've installed the funmap hack on the *Crysis* demo, then you'll have already had the pleasure of freezing and exploding Koreans in a way that only a T-1000 unit could recover from.

But when was the first monster frozen and shattered? *Prey* and *Dark Messiah*

kept the freez bomb dream alive in 2006, but according to our research – by which we mean asking around the office and taking the first answer that was said with any degree of certainty – it was *Duke Nukem 3D* that first allowed you to run up to a frosted monster and kick him into something you could put in your cocktail.

Do you know any better? If you do, post it on the forums at pczone.co.uk, where you will be festooned with bunting and offered a game.

MAME FRAME BIG BEE ROUND-UP

IT'S SAID THAT if bees were to die out, humans would die within a generation. I like believing it, so I'm not going to research it, in case it's a lie. Bees are important in arcade gaming too – especially in 1982, when Sno-Bees were the bad guys in block-sliding classic *Pengo*. Incidentally, *Pengo* was the first videogame to use Beethoven's *Ode To Joy* – and the most recent, *Peggle*, also has bees in the background. 1982 also gave us *Funky Bee*. This was as close as you get to a bee simulator; the point was to fly over flowers, which gave you far more points than shooting the insects that appeared. And who can forget the 'Skate or Die!' killer bees

from *720 Degrees* – Atari's vision of an apiarian Baron von Blubba?

Soon, bees became a euphemism for heavily-armed spacecraft – with the legendary bell-collecting *Twinbee* shooting food out of the skies, and *Bee Storm* – which was essentially a literal translation of a Japanese pun, and didn't have any bees in it at all.

So, who wins the massive bees in videogames round-up? Well, to be honest we can't decide.

Not to mention the fact that we're still squirming with self-hatred for ever thinking about using the phrase "Atari's vision of an apiarian Baron von Blubba". Who the hell do we think we are?



BIG BEE ROUND-UP



The beeless *Bee Storm*.



Wingless Sno-Bees.
Possibly not bees.



Twinbee – borderline, re bees.

WHAT IS MAME?

MAME is the *Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator*, currently emulating over 3,500 games. You can download it from www.mame.net – use *Mame32* for a nice front-end. Then you can download *Robby Roto*, which is legal. You can play all the others too, but not legally. So stop it. Right now.

PLAY IT!

Duke Nukem 3D is available for free at 3D Realms' downloads page. So our usual belly-dancing around the edges of legality is redundant

- 1 Go to www.3drealms.com/downloads.html – there's loads of stuff to download here, but do try to focus on *Duke Nukem 3D*. Unless you don't want to. It's not like we'll know.
- 2 Download the 6MB file, and run it using a combination of pointing and clicking.
- 3 Once you've played that, you might want to download the original *Duke Nukem* platformer, at snipurl.com/nukem.
- 4 Phone all your friends and tell them how they don't make games like that any more and how you're going to make your own game with 250 different guns including one that melts faces.



BACK IN THE DAY...



GAMING MUSIC

By everyone in the office

We've all listened to music while playing games. And just sometimes, they get forever linked.

Take Ed – he can't listen to Muse's *Absolution* without being transported to *Half-Life 2*'s Water Hazard level.

Sometimes they even work together – Sefton played *Sabre Wulf* whilst listening to *Hungry Like The Wolf*, and Log used to play *Manic Miner* when Paul Young's *Love of the Common People* was playing non-stop on the radio.

More poignantly still, Steve played *Mercenary* while listening to Queen's *Living On My Own*.

There's no punchline to this – it's just one of those things everyone has. Why don't you use this as an ice-breaker with a lady?

SUPERTEST

2008: THE GAMES WE WANT

The **ZONE** staff yap about what they want most from the New Year...

YOUR VIEW

Following our annual celebration of nostalgia, we asked what your highlights of the year have been:

THE DIZZYING HEIGHTS

Portal was short, to the point, but sublime to play and replay. Anyone who says Valve don't know a good game when they see it is just talking arse.

Dogen_D_Derrible

BOO!

The Witcher was a pleasant surprise, as it came out of nowhere (from my perspective) and offer up some lovely, gritty RPGing.

Beats12

A BIT IN BETWEEN

The very best and the very worst of this year came in a single box for me. *WOW: The Burning Crusade*. Oh, how I both love and hate it at the same time.

SunScramble

PEE-SOAKED LOWS

Quake Wars turned out to be a disappointment for me: I was basically expecting it to rule my multiplayer life but my experience of it is basically the same as every other online shooter of the last seven years but with a stupider interface.

-Doomus-

BRILL! BUT NOT REALLY

Crysis being a great game... but not a fantastic one, a lot of it feels flat to me in terms of the way you move etc. Maybe I shouldn't have played *COD4* right before it.

Liquid_metal

THE INSTANT THAT the clock chimes midnight on the 31 December, we at **PC ZONE** attempt to forget the entirety of the year before it, throwing our PCs and every game we have in a pile and setting them alight. However, as we love you we have decided to have the ceremony early, and around the pyre we had the Supertest in which we decide what games we are most looking forward to in 2008.

As Will's *Fallout 3* poisoning worsened, he worried that it may not be all that he dreamed, but remains hopeful that it will. Jamie optimistically voiced that *Far Cry 2* will not just be the bee's knees, but all its other appendages. And Steve is sure that *Left 4 Dead* will be the next *Counter-Strike*, getting all kinds of online gamers in a muddle. Ed insisted on saying that *Warhammer Online* will be terrible, but

relented and admitted that *World of Warcraft*'s upcoming *Wrath of the Lich King* expansion would at least make him smile. A bit.

This was before he was struck by a low-flying brick, stopping him from getting the Supertest on the disc in time for deadline. However, you can hear it all on www.pczone.co.uk, because we're all up with your hip internet, we are. **PCZ**

Sefton - lord of all he surveys.



Ed - not actually this deformed.



Will - listens to sheds.



Ed admitted *WOW: Wrath of the Lich King* would make him smile. A bit



Steve - afraid this photo will make him look like a dick.

STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill returns to Richard Garriott's *Tabula Rasa*...

HI, I'M DELBERT Baumgartner, a random name thrown up by the *Tabula Rasa* character creation screen. Except I'm not, as 'that name is in use by somebody else.' So why offer it to me then? Another random name, another refusal. And again, and again, each rejection met by an increasingly exasperated hail of expletives. How about Steve Hill? Gone. Neverquest Hill? Gone. At the end of my tether, I type in "Stupid C***" and am sternly ticked off. Rapidly losing the will to live, I christen myself "Pczone Neverquest," choose some random clobber and enter this world as a bearded buffoon in a pair of dodgy shades.

At least I'm not alone, joined in his *NeverQuest* debut by PC ZONE's new disc editor, Ed Zitron. That's actually his real name; his *Tabula Rasa* character is known as Moresome Welles, and it's a doppelganger of mine.

"You look like me," I point out.

"The characters all look the same," whispers Zitron. "Like Bono's cousin."

BEST OF BRITISH

With the pleasantries concluded, Zitron suggests we go fighting. Although the plan is cut short when it transpires that I'm not experienced enough to do so.

"Oh wank," says Zitron, and stops dancing ecstatically.

Experience is gained by slaughtering innocent creatures, and the nearby Boargars are no match for our dual assault as we wordlessly mow them down. In the meantime Richard Garriott himself makes a guest appearance, announcing "Greetings soldiers! General British here. Thank you for joining the AFS!"

His appearance causes something of a stir among the great unwashed, various soldiers chipping in with such platitudes as "British! Hail! What a pleasant surprise," "Afternoon sir," "Salut," "Yo, oh holy British", and "I want my patch." British himself announces, "I am giving a demo for Russian TV, any Russian players on today?"

There doesn't appear to be, although one Almonté takes a slightly leftfield approach, asking the creator of the game, "General British, how many clowns are there in the AFS?"

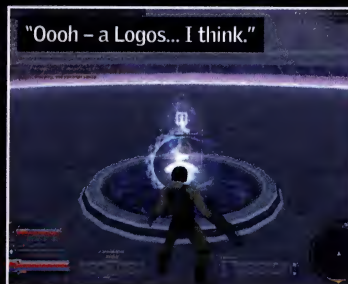
Nomis runs with the idea, stating, "We demand official AFS clowns to entertain the troops."

This appears to be more than the godfather of computer role-playing can take, and Mr Garriott disappears as quickly as he appeared.

"Short and mysterious," surmises Whedon. "That's our British."

"British is ponce," offers the more abrupt Smurf.

Richard Garriott's appearance causes a stir among the great unwashed



Amidst the (lack of) excitement, myself and Zitron shoot up the wilderness, until a giant heffalump encases us in stringy green substance.

PRETTY GREEN

"I think we should run," declares Zitron, and we leg it into the nearest cave.

"This game has some of the worst caves ever," he claims. "You just get lost." "I'm lost," I yell, minutes later.

Having collected a mystical Logos, we emerge into the daylight and Zitron promises to take me "somewhere half-arse interesting, even if we will get murdered."

True to his word he leads me into the thick of the battle, where a massive spaceship looms above my head, causing me to hide behind a tree.

After vanquishing a few dozen Thrax, it's Zitron's home time. A brave young warrior by the name of Will Porter replaces him, and is amazed to discover that he "can jump really far". He is even more amazed at an aerial assault, and screams, "Bloody hell, that was a spaceship."

Following a ferocious battle, he is caked in the blood of the vanquished and declares, "that was honestly vaguely exciting."



Taking charge of our army of two, I order Will to help me tear out the hearts of the Thrax, something he deems "not very sci-fi." Nevertheless, he sticks to the task in hand, and we soon have the requisite number.

"Hooray for hearts," squeals the recruit, yet to be numbed by the horrors of war.

We need to head back to the base with our morbid trophies to claim a reward, and I lead the way using a rudimentary map and a limited sense of direction.

Following a joyless trudge, the insolent Will pipes up, "Can we go somewhere with less trees? We're supposed to be in space, not Thetford Forest."

I finally find the way back to the base with my youthful ward in tow, but he's still playing up, and while I attempt to further the war effort he asks me if he can dance. He's already limbered up into a jig, and in the face of bloodshed, desolation and misery, it provides a welcome semblance of light relief. Swept up in the moment, I just can't control my feet, and join him in a soft shoe shuffle.

"Good to know," says Will, "that even in the face of the annihilation of the human race, we still got rhythm." **PCZ**



DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

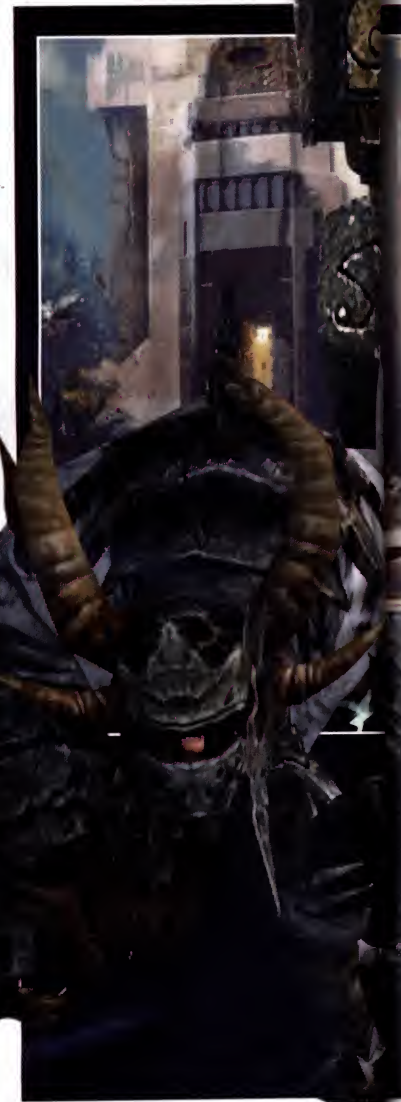
THE ART OF GUILD WARS

Ed Zitron gingerly ventures back into Tyria to pursue *Guild Wars* art director Daniel Dociu...

GOING FROM DARK horse to multi-million seller, *Guild Wars* has been the Cinderella story of the MMO world, battling against the heavyweights of *WOW* and *EverQuest II* for supremacy – and holding its own. Art director Daniel Dociu (right) certainly has got a lot to do with this success. We've cornered him to find out more about how the look and styles of *Guild Wars*, and the new expansion pack *Eye of the North*, came about. All the while wondering where we've seen that face before...



Daniel's designs range from normal to slightly crackers.



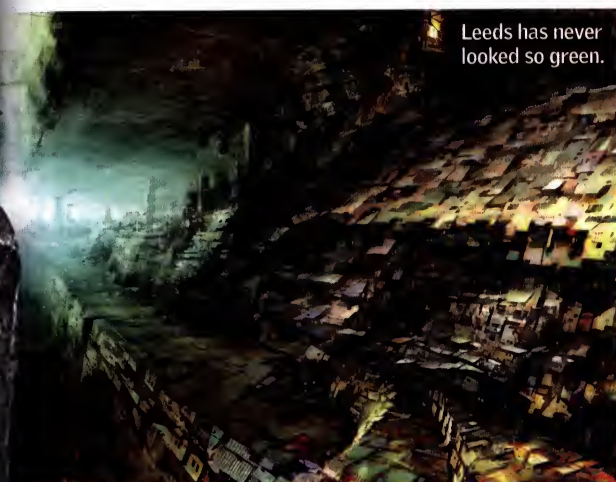
01

A PROBLEM OF SIZE: "The scope of the game is definitely one big challenge. An MMO of *Guild Wars'* proportion is something I hadn't done before, and it took a different perspective. It needed a different kind of thinking: a lot more planning, the ability to step back and look at the big picture and plan for all the details to fit and work within the context of a broader storyline. And from a production perspective the scope doesn't even compare! We're talking 100 maps, each of them vast enough for the player to roam around for hours. Then there's the need for having all of these maps to look reasonably unique, diverse, different and rich. In an MMO, you can go anywhere, and see everything from a different angle – and that's a real challenge for the designers and artists."





03 INSPIRATIONAL ARTISTRY: "I do inspirational pieces that stimulate the imaginations of the art team and designers. We use my art to start conversations, and many of the ideas that have to be adapted to the realities of production to make them usable in the game – some turn out not to be useable at all. My job is to inspire the team and push the envelope, and lay the base for the content. Because I believe the environments set the tone for a game, I gravitate towards defining the look of the regions, but when I want to take a break from that, I try my luck with creature or character work."



Leeds has never looked so green.

04 GUILD LORE: "I am not in control of the storyline, nor do I want to be. The way that I personally like to work, and the way things oftentimes work out, is that I throw out ideas and propose a possible context that these ideas could work in – a seed for the storywriters to consider. If at that point I manage to get them inspired and they get excited about the idea, I'll leave it up to them to expand on that and let that seed grow. We'll negotiate back and forth, and make sure the idea isn't watered down and doesn't compromise the integrity of the vision. It's a collaborative effort; a synergy of ideas."



Let's see Seb Coe get funding for this.

02 ORIENTAL SLANT: "With *Factions*, we were participating at a trade show in Asia where we built a small prototype map with an Asian feel to it. We were at a point where we were wrapping up *Prophecies*, and we were thinking what possible directions we could follow with our next chapter, and the good response we got from that demo prompted us to dare tackle an Asian theme. We figured it made sense from a story standpoint, it allowed us to move onto a different continent and it was something we hadn't done before. We all got excited about the challenge. It was very well received, and so we moved onto *Nightfall*, and we had to decide where we'd go next. We felt that Africa and the Middle East had a lot to offer, and thought "Hey, let's give this a shot."



Pagodas aren't exactly exciting, are they?

"I throw out ideas and propose possible content – a seed for the storywriters to consider"

Daniel Dociu explains on his role in creating *Guild Wars*' stories

COMMENTARY

05 GETTING IN THE MOOD: "We let everybody loose for a week or so to go and search the web and hit the library for inspiration. We then dump a lot of reference material into folders that are then organised by subject, and add to a huge database of imagery that we put together for each of the new chapters in the game. Some ideas naturally tend to surface or resonate with the entire team, and organically evolve into becoming major themes and components of our visual vocabulary. We tend to let things happen naturally, because I believe that if things are felt within the team and there's an emotional reaction to the material it shows in the quality of the final product and is embraced."

Bet you a pound you can't climb that.



06 CREATURE FEATURES: "We have five full-time concept artists, and over half of our production staff are illustrators and concept artists. There's a large number of people who have diverse backgrounds, skills and interests who are encouraged to contribute to the creation process. That's where the diversity comes from. As far as creature design goes, the wackiest ideas will be thrown around and our people will have the ability to illustrate them convincingly. Designers and writers post everything that they're making on a huge wall and whatever resonates with the team finds a home in the game. I think the important thing is to facilitate exposure for these ideas and see what clicks."

"As far as creature design goes, the wackiest ideas will be thrown around and our people will illustrate them convincingly"

No idea is too crazy for the *Guild Wars* monster design team



Oh, Slogothor. It could never work between us.

- 07 EYE OF THE NORTH:** "At times the development of the different expansions started to blur together. For *Eye of the North*, I think the idea was to have a game that is set in the original continent, but to build on the big, mountainous regions, and the discussion went to what kind of new player races we could introduce there. The Norn, a kind of Viking-looking race, came to mind, and one thing led to another. The idea was embraced by the team, everybody felt comfortable with it the second time around – we've done snow-topped mountains before."

- 08 THE EXCITING SEQUEL:** "I personally, when I talk to the content team here, see *Guild Wars 2* as an opportunity to tackle some established themes and locations with a completely new arsenal. We want *Guild Wars 2* to be to *Guild Wars* what Peter Jackson's *King Kong* was to the original. It's the same old story, but the treatments and our ability to draw the viewer into it are greatly enhanced by the new technical features that are now available to us. That's the scope – old *King Kong* to the new *King Kong*. That's how high I'm shooting."



This 340-bedroom apartment is available for a mere £3billion.

- 09 DANIEL'S ORIGINS:** "I've been trained in Eastern European art from a really young age. If you want to succeed in anything, you're forced to make important decisions, and undertake a rather unforgiving regime of education; All I've done in my life is art. I went to school and studied architecture, got my masters degree in industrial design, I worked in product design for a few years, then I finally got out of the Eastern Bloc and came to the US. When I came to the States I briefly worked as a designer until someone opened my eyes to the opportunities in interactive entertainment, and I jumped ship right away. I've been in games design ever since."



Give me your fingernails!

- 10 I AM FATHER GRIGORI:** "My son Horia, (who's working at Arenanet as a storyboard artist and modeler) was working at Valve during *Half-Life 2*'s development and I used to visit him. Bill Van Buren, the producer, asked me if I'd be willing to have a role in the game and they took a few pictures of me. Victor Antonov, the art director thought my mug would fit the Father Grigori role best. I guess it is to this day my one accomplishment in the industry that got me the most attention!"

CVG.CO.UK



COMPUTER AND
VIDEO GAMES...

Established 1981



PCZONE

Future Publishing,
2 Balcombe Street
London NW1 6NW

TEL: 020 7042 4720
FAX: 020 7042 4729
EMAIL: letters@pczone.co.uk
WEB: www.pczone.co.uk

Question: What would you sacrifice
an arm and a leg to own?

COLONIAL FLEET

Editor James Sefton 020 7042 4721. A pint of beer
Deputy Editor Will Porter 020 7042 4725. Three arms and three legs
Production Editor Richard Cosgrove 020 7042 4723. GITS-style cyborg body
Art Editor Dale Pringle 020 7042 4727. A yacht
Deputy Art Editor James Raff 020 7042 4722. A time machine
Book Editor Ed Zitron 020 7042 4726. Robotic limbs
Section Editor Steve Hogarty 020 7042 4728. Cure for cancer (and Guinness)
Staff Writer Jon 'Log' Blyth 020 7042 4724. A gorgeous, compliant nurse
Contributors Pavel Barter, Alex Dale, Steve Hill, Martin Korda, Andy Robinson,
and Philip Ward
PCZONE.CO.UK Editor Gavin Ogden 020 7042 4311
Hardware Photography In-house

CYLON FORCES

Group Senior Editor Steve Jarratt
Group Art Director Ian Miller
Creative Director Robin Abbott
Design Director Matthew Williams
Editorial Director Jim Douglas
Ad Director Ryan Ferguson 01225 788114
Ad Manager Dudley Rochelle 01225 732261
London Sales Director Malcolm Stoodley
UK Sales Director Jayne Caple

MARKETING
Acquisitions Product Manager Stuart Brann

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager Stuart Agnew

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Production Co-ordinator Michelle McCormack
Production Manager Ralph Stringer
Head of Production Richard Mason

LICENSING
Head of International Licensing Tim Hudson
Tel +44 (0)1225 442244 Fax +44 (0)1225 732275

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED
Assistant Publisher Lee Nutter
Publishing Director James Birns
Chief Operating Officer Simon Wear
UK Chief Executive Robert Price

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Phone our UK hotline on 0870 837 4722
Subscribe online at www.myfavouriteimagazines.co.uk
For back issues call 0870 442 0957

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE... 31 January

Printed in the UK by Southernprint on behalf of Future.
Cover printed in the UK by Midway.
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd,
East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 0207 429 4000

Future Publishing Ltd is part of Future plc. Future produces
carefully targeted special-interest magazines, websites and
events for people who share a passion. We publish more than
170 magazines and websites and 100 international editions of
our titles are published across the world.
Future plc is a public company
Non-executive Chairman: Roger Parry
Chief Executive: Stevie Spring
Group Finance Director: John Bowman
Exchange Symbol: FUTR.
www.futureplc.com Tel +44 (0)1225 442244

PCZONE is the registered trademark of Future
Publishing Limited. All rights reserved.

© Future Publishing Limited 2008. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be
reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing
Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The
registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth
Street, Bath BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information
only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot
accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are
advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of
products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us,
you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part
in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any
physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at
your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or
contractors shall be liable for loss or damage.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!
PCZONE

Call 0870 837 4722 or log on to
www.myfavouriteimagazines.co.uk

recycle
When you have finished with
this magazine please recycle it.



All details correct at the time of going to press. But they might change. PC ZONE is a fiddle mistress, much like the sea or lady luck.

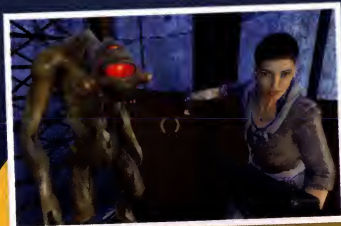
NEXT MONTH!



EXCLUSIVE!

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING

Brand new interviews and screenshots from the biggest name in MMOs.
All the essential info on the most important PC expansion of the year!



**THE MAKING OF THE
ORANGE BOX**
EXCLUSIVE! How Episode 2,
Portal and TF2 and were made



**FRONTLINES: FUEL
OF WAR**
REVIEWED! The shooter by
the Desert Combat modders



DEAD SPACE
We take a closer look at EA's
upcoming futuristic Resident
Evil-beater

WHAT MMO - FREE!

From next month - a 16-page massively multiplayer
magazine free every issue! All you need to know about
the world of MMOs!



ON THE 9GB DVD

Playable demos of:

- COH: Opposing Fronts
- Universe at War: Earth Assault
- Stranger
- Maple Story - full client



Plus!
All the latest movies, mods, maps,
free games and essential PC utilities

ALSO! Steve Hill's adventures in NeverQuest,
a classic-stuffed Retro Zone, arseing about in
Jackass, and tons of free games, mods and maps

ON SALE
31 JAN

BUYER'S GUIDE



If you don't own at least 80 per cent of these games, we hate you!

Microsoft games

Must buy!



MICROSOFT MADELEINE ALBRIGHT SIMULATOR X

PCZ Issue 177 - 98%
Let's face it, you're never going to be Madeleine Albright, so why not simply pretend to be in the comfort of your own living room? This latest iteration in the series captures the feeling of being the first woman to become United States Secretary of State like no other. Can you dictate foreign policy? How will you handle a drunken Bill Clinton helicoptering outside your window at 4am? Albright may have been succeeded by Colin Powell, but this sim has been succeeded by nothing - we haven't stopped being constantly blown away yet!



MICROSOFT FRIGHT SIM

PCZ Issue 182 - 92%
The latest entry in the terrifying *Fright Simulator* series is the biggest since they did that one where the ghost comes out at you unexpectedly and goes 'wooooooahh'. *Fright Sim* wows with an unprecedented number of banshees, and the ability to crank up those demons - if your card can handle it, that is!



MICROSOFT PLIGHT SIM

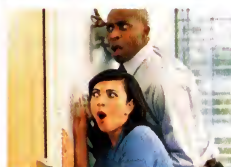
PCZ Issue 163 - 90%
The merging of *Plight Simulator* and *Blight Simulator* meant that, at last, the Irish Potato Famine could be fully realised in this, the latest iteration of the *Plight Simulator* series. The pathogenic water mould could've done with a bit more work, but with impoverished peasants like these, who cares?

BUDGET



MICROSOFT NIGHT SIM

PCZ Issue 131 - 90%
Holy McGuacamole - on toast! Was that dusk flying by, or did the latest iteration of nocturnal fun just land in our laps? Microsoft have managed to really take us into the future - around two or three hours to be exact - and dropped us head-first into a world that's the same but DARKER! And colder! Brrr!



MICROSOFT SLIGHT SIM

PCZ Issue 180 - 89%
Did you hear about your friend who did that thing but didn't? And to his face too! Well now you can experience saying that thing they didn't do without the terrible repercussions of ruining people's lives! Microsoft have really nailed the dissenting whisper and turning your back on people in this version. Aces!



MICROSOFT INVITE SIM

PCZ Issue 185 - 88%
You have been invited to... a friend's birthday party. You have been invited to... your daughter's wedding. You have been invited to... the best invitation simulator this magazine has ever come across. Time: right now. Place: heaven. RSVP to: our hearts, Microsoft, because we think we're in love. Magical.

BUDGET



FACE COMBAT 4.0

PCZ Issue 116 - 88%
What could be more exhilarating than two faces colliding at 700mph in a bloody clash of noses and sinew before wrangling violently for sometimes hours on end, with commentary from TV's Hank Wanklebury? Not much, we can assure you! Except perhaps Microsoft's excellent *Plight Simulator*.

Sims Stuff packs

Must buy!



THE SIMS 2: BROWN PIXEL

PCZ Issue 183 - 97%
Holy shit! Did you say brown pixel? We couldn't take our shoes off fast enough when we heard about the new arrival in Alphaville - a never-before-seen pixel in a shade of brown that's so naturally wood-like and inviting you'll try to climb inside the game, destroying your monitor and the pixel you loved so much in a scene that provides a bruising metaphor for the way you spend your time and money. This is a wonderful way to learn how not to waste £10, and at just £10 it won't break the bank!



THE SIMS 2: TALL LADY

PCZ Issue 184 - 97%
You thought running a harmonious house with happy Sims was tough? Wait until you put a tall lady in the house! She'll bring a whole new meaning to the endlessly repeated phrase "Watch your head, tall lady!" And £10 is the second lowest bank note there is!



THE SIMS 2: EGGS & GUINNESS

PCZ Issue 185 - 97%
No *Sims* kitchen can be considered a kitchen unless it has eggs and Guinness! The second you install this literally free £10 stuff pack, there will be eggs and Guinness everywhere, to the exclusion of any other aspect of gameplay, or anything else.



THE SIMS 2: TEN QUID CHRYSANTHEMUM MASTER

PCZ Issue 186 - 97%
What could be better than planting a chrysanthemum in your virtual garden? Nothing could be better, and if you say it could you're either stupid or just trying to make us all angry. Contains up to four chrysanthemums at as little as £2.50 each.



THE SIMS 2: INVISIBLE CONKERS

PCZ Issue 187 - 97%
Could this be any more amazing? Watch your Sims engage in a see-through version of the schoolboy classic. Why not glue some real conkers to the screen, like we did? The very concept of £10 seems ugly and vulgar in comparison.



THE SIMS 2: THE SIMS' (WHERE X=THE SIMS)

PCZ Issue 188 - 97%
Watch in fractal glee as your Sims play *The Sims!* With the recursive mode on, up to ten billion Sims can simultaneously be on fire, while goading their Sims pets into having sex for £10! There's nothing we wouldn't do to own this game.



THE SIMS 2: THE TINKER'S KNAPSACK

PCZ Issue 116 - 88%
Simply place your favourite Sim into the Tinker's Knapsack, and he'll magically appear right next to you, offering you companionship, affection, and mind-smearing sex acts for up to 45 years. We'd wait for it to go to budget, to be honest.

Racing type games

Must buy!



NEED FOR SPEED: VROOM SKREEE!

PCZ Issue 128 - 95%
Vroom Skreee! introduced several features that we now take for granted in modern-day racing games: orchestral music that plays faster depending on how fast you're driving, throwable 'koopas' shells that 'zero in' on enemy racers, and the now-obligatory underwater level. It might have been bettered in terms of graphics, but it's never been bettered in terms of things that aren't graphics and sound. Furthermore, the recently released patch improves the spelling of 'Porsche', removes the top speed of several cars, and adds braking. A true classic.



GRT: FLM (4TH SERIES)

PCZ Issue 185 - 92%
The *FLM* racing series may have taken on an unlikely sponsor in the form of *Bergerac* actor John Nettles, but the developers have maintained an admirable vision and integrity. The course in which you ride around on a bicycle and solve the recent theft of a jade amulet is a minor miracle.



BURNOUT 3: TIME FOR SKIDS

PCZ Issue 166 - 92%
What time is it? No need to check your watch, because it's time for skids and nothing you say or do can ever change that. *Time For Skids* took skidding to 12 distinct new levels with its revolutionary sideways wheels - you have to skid just to go forwards! Watch out for crashes, because they'll happen too!



WORLD OF RACES

PCZ Issue 177 - 91%
A race of races? Races having a race? *World of Races* sought to finally end the debate over which race is the best - by pitting them against one another in a head-to-head marathon, culminating in a rainbow deathmatch! The keyboard controls the left leg, while the mouse controls the right - get ready for fun!



JOHNNY MCWHEELS

PCZ Issue 67 - 90%
A tragic story about a boy born with wheels for arms and legs, and a car chassis for a torso, and an engine for a heart - *Johnny McWheels* neither states nor references the hero's affliction as you race him across seven incredible tracks. Includes a pull-out poster of Johnny McWheels himself.



RICHARD GARRIOTT'S RACE 'N' LEARN

PCZ Issue 189 - 90%
Do sums to accelerate, answer general knowledge questions to brake. Geometry makes you steer left, and astrology makes you steer right! Once you've learned the rules, you'll learn everything else in the world thanks to Richard Garriott.



GOOSEBACK WANDERLUST 2008

PCZ Issue 187 - 90%
The first and probably still the best globe-trotting gooseback-racing title, *Gooseback Wanderlust 2008* will have you lazily racing your way from Alaska to Azerbaijan in a series of acrobatic, honk-filled events. He who honks last, honks the hardest and is the best.

Magazines
aren't for
reading...

they're for
reloading.



Get your ass kicked for free on the
mind-blowing jolt public servers or take complete
control with your own jolt clan server.

Take no prisoners. Accept no substitutes.
www.jolt.co.uk

Cyberpower recommends Windows Vista™ Home Premium



All Desktop systems come with 3 year Limited Warranty

Unleash the power

CyberPOWER Inc.



Intel® Core™ 2 Extreme Processor

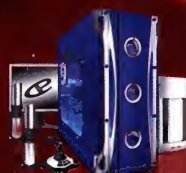
incl. Del & VAT

(12MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Extreme QX9650 3.00Ghz	£ 1539
(8MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q6700 2.66Ghz	£ 1195
Quad Q6600 2.4Ghz	£ 1009
(4MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
E6850 3.00Ghz	£ 1009
E6750 2.66Ghz	£ 949
E6550 2.33Ghz	£ 935

Gamer Infinity SLI™ 900

nForce® 750i-SLI™ Chipset Motherboard w/ Dual 16X PCI-E
Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Premium
 OCZ® 4096MB PC-6400 DDR2-800 Dual Channel Memory
 400GB 7200RPM SATA-II 3.0Gb/s 16MB Cache Ultra Fast HD
 2x GeForce® 8800 GT 512MB Video running SLI™ Mode
 18x Double Layer DVD+/-RW Drive & 16x DVD-ROM
 Logitech® Keyboard and Optical Mouse
 NZXT® Lexa Blackline Tower Case w/ MOD See Through Window
 Dual Engine High Performance Power Supply
 Monitor not included but optional

£935



Intel® Core™ 2 Extreme Processor

incl. Del & VAT

(12MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Extreme QX9650 3.00Ghz	£ 1209
(8MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q6700 2.66Ghz	£ 879
Quad Q6600 2.4Ghz	£ 695
(4MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
E6850 3.00Ghz	£ 695
E6750 2.66Ghz	£ 639
E6550 2.33Ghz	£ 619

Gamer Infinity SLI™ 800

MSI® 650i P6N SLI-2F Chipset Motherboard
Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Premium
 OCZ® 2048MB PC-6400 DDR2-800 Dual Channel Memory
 320GB 7200RPM SATA-II 3.0Gb/s 16MB Cache Ultra Fast HD
 GeForce® 8800 GT 512MB Video
 18x Double Layer DVD+/-RW Drive
 NVIDIA® nForce® 6 7.1 3-D Surround Sound
 Logitech® Keyboard & Optical Mouse
 Turbo X-Cruiser® Case 420 Watt w/ See Through Window
 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
 Monitor not included but optional

£619



Intel® Core™ 2 Extreme Processor

incl. Del & VAT

(12MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
Extreme QX9650 3.00Ghz	£ 1079
(8MB Cache, 1066Mhz FSB)	
Quad Q6700 2.66Ghz	£ 745
Quad Q6600 2.4Ghz	£ 565
(4MB Cache, 1333Mhz FSB)	
E6850 3.00Ghz	£ 565
E6750 2.66Ghz	£ 505
E6550 2.33Ghz	£ 489

Gamer Infinity 700

MSI® P35 Intel® Chipset Motherboard
Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Basic
 OCZ® 2048MB PC-6400 DDR2-800 Memory
 250GB 7200RPM SATA-II 3.0Gb/s 8MB Cache
 Ultra Fast HD
 Geforce® 8500 GT 512MB Video
 18x Double Layer DVD+/-RW Drive
 NVIDIA® nForce® 6 7.1 3-D Surround Sound
 Logitech® Keyboard and Optical Mouse
 Nzxt Hush Silent Case
 Monitor not included but optional

£489



Free Shipping

Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor

(800Mhz FSB), incl. Del & VAT

T7700 4MB L2 Cache, 2.40Ghz	£ 1035
T7500 4MB L2 Cache, 2.20Ghz	£ 889
T7250 4MB L2 Cache, 2.00Ghz	£ 839

* Images for display only.

Gamer Xplorer X5-80*

Intel® Centrino® Duo processor technology
 - Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor
 - Mobile Intel® PM965 Express Chipset
 - Intel® PRO/Wireless 4965a/b/g/n Network Connection

Genuine Windows Vista™ Home Premium

Asus® S96S Notebook Verified by Intel
 1024 MB DDR-II PC5300 667 Memory
 120GB SATA150 Hard Drive & 8x DVD+/-RW Drive
 15.4" WXGA+ TFT Display 1280x800
 1000/100/10 Network, 56K V.92 Fax Modem
 NVIDIA® GeForce® GO 8600M GS 256MB + Turbo Cache
 3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader
 3x USB 2.0 Ports, 1x IEEE-1394 Firewire Port
 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot, 3 Hours Battery Life
 Weight only 6.39 Lbs, Free Carrying Case
 6 Custom Colors to Choose From
 1 Year Limited Warranty

£839

www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk • 0800 019 0863

CyberPower PCs use genuine Microsoft® Windows® www.microsoft.com/piracy/howtotell

NVIDIA®, nForce®, GeForce®, SLI™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries*.

Intel®, Intel® logo, Intel Inside®, Intel Inside® logo, Intel® Core™ 2 Duo, Intel® Core™ Duo, Intel® Centrino®, Intel® Centrino® logo, Celeron®, Intel® Xeon™, Intel® SpeedStep™, Itanium™, Pentium™, and Pentium® III Xeon™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel® Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All prices are subject to change without notice or obligation. CyberPower is not responsible for any typographical and photographic errors. Copyright © 2007 CyberPower. All rights reserved.